# A TRAVELLER LOOKS AT THE WORLD

BY

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

# A TRAVELLER LOOKS AT THE WORLD

By

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

1977

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
KULAPATI K. M. MUNSHI MARG
BOMBAY-400 007

*First Edition, 1977*



**Price Rs. 5/-**

PRINTED IN INDIA

By R. Monteiro at Associated Advertisers & Printers, 505, Tardeo Arthur Road, Bombay-400 034, and Published by S. Ramakrishnan, Executive Secretary, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati K. M. Munshi Marg, Bombay-400 007.

# KULAPATI'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting itself to the utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions that allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the

alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the Indian mind, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita,* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata:* "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and

speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone, the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

New Delhi.
1, Queen Victoria Road,
*October 3, 1951.*

K. M. MUNSHI

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

*A Pilgrim Looks at the World,* issued in two volumes by us, is a running narrative, interspersed with observations and comments, by Swami Ranganathananda, of his many lecture tours abroad covering nearly fifty countries, non-communist as well as communist.

While Vol. I of *A Pilgrim Looks at the World,* comprising the narrative of Swamiji's tours of the countries of the Pacific, South-East Asian, and European regions, and of Nepal, between 1958 and 1966, is a handy volume (though running to about 600 pages) Vol. II is a bulkier book consisting of 800 pages, comprising the narrative of Swamiji's tours of U.S.A., Canada, Central and South America including Cuba, Australia, some South-East Asian countries, some European countries, Afghanistan, Zambia, Madagascar, and Mauritius between 1968 and 1974.

It was felt desirable to publish a separate book at a moderate price out of two of the more important sections of Vol. II, with the title "*A Traveller Looks at the World*", to enable a wider circle of readers to have the benefit of the impressions of Swamiji, who has been a real messenger of India wherever he has gone and who is a pilgrim from India at home everywhere.

We hope this publication will be heartily received by the thoughtful reader.

CONTENTS

PART TWO

# A TRAVELLER LOOKS AT THE WORLD

## PART ONE

*Introduction*: On his return to India from his extensive lecture tour of U.S.A. and 24 other countries in East and West, between 18 July 1968 and 31 December 1969, during which he addressed a total of 934 lectures and question-answer sessions, of which 90 were television, radio and newspaper interviews, 30 were in churches and temples, 141 were in Vedānta Societies and Ramakrishna Ashramas, 156 were in private parlours, 197 were in public forums, and 320 were in 115 universities and colleges, Swami Ranganathananda was interviewed for 2½ hours by the Ramakrishna monastic brotherhood of the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta-14, including its President and the Editor of its well-known monthly, *Prabuddha Bharata*, one of the four English journals of the Ramakrishna Order.

The questions put by the brothers on various interesting topics, and the Swami's thought-provoking answers to them, were later published serially in the *Prabuddha Bharata* between July 1970 and August 1971 under the title: *A Traveller Looks at the World*.

The following is based on that publication, but duly edited and, wherever found necessary, amplified, in the case of the answers, by the Swami. —*Publishers*

### *Current Human Trends in America*

*Question*: What human trends in the West impressed you most and what distressed you most, and why so?

*Answer:* In the West, especially in the United States, where I spent a full year of the year and a half, there were many things that really impressed me, as they would impress any visitor. The tremendous energy of the people, their hard work, the wonderful material wealth and prosperity that has been built up, their advancement in science and technology—all these are things that really strike a visitor.

But as you have implied in your question, there are also

things that distress any visitor. One obvious thing that strikes the visitor is the pervasive presence of materialism or worldliness in a big way. The philosophy that man lives by, in contemporary American civilization, takes him to be solely an individual conditioned by his senses. Such a philosophy makes organic satisfactions the highest and only ideal of man. That is materialism in what may be called the crassest sense. During recent decades, America has imbibed this type of materialism in a big way. Man is just a physical body, and organic satisfactions are everything. In the initial stages, the result of this philosophy was fine. Man became energetic and active, and could express himself effectively on the organic plane. But at a later stage, the evils began to manifest themselves.

Out of these evils have come what the Americans themselves refer to today as the sex, crime, and other explosions in America. Any visitor is struck by this dominance of sex; similarly with crime. These are the two prominent features of the American social scene today: sex and crime. It is difficult to give an idea of the extent of the current sex explosion in the States; it is open and blatant. This is a very distressing phenomenon. The glory of woman as a spiritual personality is ignored; only the flesh counts; and the feminine body is 'sold'—in advertisements, in the papers and journals, in the TV and radio. The vulgarization of the otherwise natural and noble value of sex has gone to extreme lengths. There was a play, recently enacted in New York, in which sex was openly demonstrated on the stage itself, in the sacred name of art, and without any inhibition. Such things go on occasionally even in the universities. And the subject, in its flimsiest form, has even entered the lists of university post-graduate research themes.

These are some of the features which really distress

any visitor and make him feel that the American society has lost its steering and direction; this strikes particularly a visitor from India with its very ancient cultural background and its understanding of the spiritual dimensions of the human personality.

But these are only what I came across through books and journals, TV and other news media. My own personal contacts, however, were exceptionally fine and rewarding, because I saw the best of America and other Western countries: students, teachers, scientists, devotees of God, and simple citizens.

### *India and the Contemporary Western Trends*

*Question:* Among the countries you visited, did you come across some thinkers who are aware of the fact that the world's fundamental problem is that of the regeneration of man? If so, how did these people view the matter?

*Answer*: Yes; such sensitive thinkers I did come across. Not only in the United States this time, but also in several European and South-East Asian and Far-Eastern countries, during my earlier visits to them. There are plenty of people who are really appalled at the fall of man in modern civilization.

But one thing I noticed in the West: It has so little understanding of human nature in depth. There is no philosophy that gives a vision of man beyond his sensate dimension. But they are now in search of such a philosophy; though, it is true, they find it difficult to grasp clearly. Accordingly, what I noticed, especially in the United States, is that when a writer or speaker deals with the foibles of contemporary society, he is excellent. But as soon as he begins to prescribe a remedy, it often turns out that the remedy prescribed is worse than the disease itself. This is parti-

cularly true in the fields of psychiatry and other sciences of man. The data on the subject of human nature, with which they work and arrive at conclusions, are very very limited. It is here that Indian philosophical and spiritual thought has something vital to contribute to the West. Indian thought is not going to prescribe just a few do's and don'ts; it, on the other hand, opens up a new vista of human growth and evolution, a new vision of human dignity and human glory. That is the greatness of the philosophy of Vedānta; and when presented in this way, it receives instant welcome and respect from thinking people in all these advanced countries.

*Question:* Is it realized by American leaders of thought that Swami Vivekananda's spiritual ministration to that country was truly prophetic? In other words, that, in teaching Vedānta and Yoga, he gave to that nation the solutions to its problems even before these took the definite shapes they have taken today?

*Answer:* Yes; this recognition is slowly coming over the minds of a small group of thinking people today. But, by and large, you do not find much impress, visible and palpable, of Swami Vivekananda's intense intellectual and spiritual work of four years, 75 years ago, on American culture and society today. It is natural. For, all vital and abiding influences do not begin to act initially on the surface levels of life; they reach out to its depths and influence from there. So we have to search for his influence in the deeper levels of American life; and we shall not fail to discover its presence and action.

During the immediate decades following Vivekananda's appearance at the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, this influence was great; and there are thinkers today who realize that the revolutionary ideas rocking the

Christian Churches today, the progressive trends among them, are in line with the ideas which Vivekananda presented on the subject. Just recently, at the Symposium of Religions, organised by the Vivekananda Vedānta Society of Chicago on 15 September 1968 at Chicago, in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the first Chicago Parliament of Religions, a Catholic leader, Father Robert Campbell, Professor of Theology, at De Paul (Catholic) University, Chicago, endorsed this point of view. In the course of his speech at the symposium, he dwelt on the current conflict between the traditionalist and the modernist in Christianity, and said, with special reference to Catholicism (*Where Religions Meet,* report on the symposium, *Prabuddha Bharata,* December 1968):

'Had I been giving this talk ten years ago, I would have given an optimistic picture of Christianity. ... But, in the ensuing years, it seems to me that there has developed a crisis in Christianity, the worst crisis in its history. ... Here are two different currents in Catholic Christianity, the traditionalist and the modernist. ... The traditionalist group affirms that Jesus is God and is unique. No other person can be mentioned in the same breath with him. But the modernist group takes issue with this, and says that Jesus is divine, true, but any one of us can be divine. And of course this strikes a very responsive chord with the Hindu outlook that the divine is in all of us. This liberal Christian outlook is sympathetic to a great extent to the Hindu outlook. As a matter of fact, on many points, I think, you will find the liberal Christian outlook moving in the direction of the East in much of its philosophy—both in its concept of an impersonal God and in the concept that we are all divine.

'The same obtains in the attitude toward man: Traditional Christianity, according to the liberal group, was charged with a pessimistic outlook arising from its dogmas such as original sin. This concept is very offensive to liberal Christianity, which holds that man is perfectible by training and proper education.

'In attitude to the world also, there is a cleavage between the two groups. Whereas the traditionalist group considers the world a

danger and an enemy, the liberal group considers this a very wrong view and affirms that it can be improved, and that we should devote ourselves to building a more humane society, instead of pining to go to heaven.

'In the Roman Catholic Church, for the last five or six years, the rebellion against authority has been a move in the direction of challenging the infallibility of the Pope, the ideas of heaven and hell, and many other traditional doctrines. The liberal group says: "Don't worry about the old-fashioned things such as seeking converts, etc., but let us develop ecumenism, develop better relations with other religions." In my own university, surveys taken of Catholic students' attitudes show a great swing toward the liberal views within the last five or six years.

'I know that the great Swami Vivekananda would himself be in favour of most of the trends in the direction of liberal Christianity; because his teaching was: "Don't be concerned about doctrines or dogmas or churches or temples," and the liberal Christian would echo these sentiments one hundred per cent. ... Although the Swami would not endorse all the modernistic attitudes — perhaps its moral code he would not endorse one hundred per cent — still I think he would be in favour of its central trends, which seem to be moving in the direction of the unity of religion which he was hoping for. I think this trend in the direction of humanism would be applauded by Swami Vivekananda if he were here today.'

The truth stressed by Father Campbell is being recognized by various thinkers in the West who have studied Swami Vivekananda.

Whether the appreciation be open or veiled, with respect to the Vedānta position, the need of the West is exactly what Swami Vivekananda had pointed out: that Western civilization should have a spiritual base, and that religions should become broader, with the readiness for dialogue with each other. There are many people who say now what Vedānta has been saying through Vivekananda and others for the last seventy years. Thus, slowly, steadily, these truths are coming to be recognized; but rather too slowly. The

Americans are so absorbed in their own immediate problems, in their own achievements, and in their own impressive technical successes, that they have not found the time or mood to deal with the deeper aspects of life, to deal with the contemporary problems in the light of the great ideas and values of Indian thought. But something in this direction is coming on in a big way. I say this because, almost every TV, radio, and newspaper interviewer who interviewed me—and I had more than ninety such experiences during the whole tour—asked me this question: How do you explain this tremendous turning to Indian spiritual thought on the part of Americans and Canadians today? This was a recurring question.

They do realize, these news media, that there is currently a turning to the inspiration of the East on the part of the people of the West. This shows that the work started by Vivekananda—the work of spreading Indian philosophical ideas, Vedāntic ideas, in the West—was a response to a genuine need, and is gathering force, decade by decade, because of this very fact. But it is also true that sometimes it is not the best that goes out of India to the West; sometimes very cheap things also go. The fact, however, remains that they in America and other countries of the West want to know about Indian spiritual thought in relation to contemporary human problems. Basically, it is the spiritual message of India that they seek. The thoughtful among them, those who seek truth and not any sensation, they do succeed in coming across the authentic philosophy and spirituality of India; others get something diluted, cheapened.

### *American Response to Vedānta*

*Question:* How genuine is American interest in Vedānta? Are intellectuals also interested?

*Answer:* People become interested when they come to know of it. It is not everyone that gets an opportunity to hear of it or know of it. But one good trend is worth noting: the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* are subjects of study in several universities and colleges in the United States. In the States and Canada alone, I visited and lectured in 84 of them; and in another 31 in the remaining 23 countries. In several of these in the States, I came across students carrying the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* with them as texts for study. They have tests also in these subjects. At the Cleveland State University, Ohio, I found a whole post-graduate class studying one of the most difficult of the Upaniṣads, the *Māṇḍūkya*. Students were sitting here and there on chairs and on the floor, informally, during my two talks on this Upaniṣad, which I gave at their request, and which they tape-recorded for later use, as they said. The Professor-in-Charge, Dr. David Miller, was in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, for a year and a half, and used to visit the Ramakrishna Math in that city. He and his wife are devoted to Indian spiritual thought and live the spiritual life.

So there are such people who have already come across the deeper levels of Indian thought in an intimate way and others who are now coming in touch with it, and they are very happy to convey the message of that thought to their students; and the students, on their part, many of them, take deep interest in these courses of study. But very often they do not get the help of teachers of the calibre of such people as Professor Miller. I have marked that, sometimes, flimsy and incorrect ideas about Vedānta and the Upaniṣads and Hinduism are given to the students. But that is because the teachers are not up to the mark, and not because of a conscious effort at distortion. However, there is a great deal of interest in Vedānta philosophy and in the

spiritual teachings of the Indian sages.

*Question:* Can American society provide a favourable atmosphere for seriously practising the spiritual disciplines of Vedānta? What are the chances of Vedāntic monasticism growing in the West?

*Answer:* At present, there is a growing desire among people, who know what man's spiritual life is, to get opportunities for living that type of spiritual life. For example, if any one organizes a spiritual retreat, people come eagerly to participate in it. This was evident when the Vivekananda Vedānta Society of Chicago announced the purchase of 80 acres of an orchard in the neighbouring State of Michigan, about 150 miles from Chicago. The township in which the land is situated bears a significant name: Ganges. When the project to establish a spiritual retreat and monastery in the Ganges township was announced, so great was the interest that people came in hundreds from three or four States to participate in the foundation laying ceremony on 26 July 1969. There were, among them, professors from the neighbouring West Michigan University at Kalamazoo. They said they were very happy to have this beautiful retreat coming up only about 40 miles away, which they could utilize for the spiritual benefit of their students and teachers.

So, when people come to know that there is such an opportunity available, they respond, especially those who understand what man's spiritual nature and spiritual hunger is. Whenever and wherever there is a talk or a lecture on spiritual life and spiritual matters, there is immediate response. People even appreciate the beauty and art of some of the Hindu rituals, apart from its philosophy; it greatly attracts them. The U.S. Government has a training programme for primary and secondary school teachers in its Centre for the Study of India in New Albany, Indiana State,

Swami Bhashyananda and I had been there, on invitation, to demonstrate some Hindu rituals to the group, besides giving a lecture on *India's World Outlook*. They were happy at the experience, they said. This interest is not just the product of a desire for something exotic. There is a desire to *participate* in the spiritual dimensions of these rituals and the intangible values they embody.

### *Problems of Contemporary American Youths*

*Question:* As you were saying, you addressed quite a number of student audiences in America. What are their main problems as revealed by their questions?

*Answer:* Their main problem at present is to understand whether man has any dimensions over and above the physical or the organic. The whole of Western thought emphasizes this organic limitation of man, whereas our spiritual thought emphasizes man's transcendence of organic limitations. According to us, man is essentially spiritual, man is essentially divine. Now this is the thought that appeals to them. Since they want to understand what it is, many questions are related to this idea of Vedānta—this idea of man's essential divinity. Many things follow from that idea. All ethical life, all spiritual life, all creative life and work, all true art, all life above the physical dimension, is based upon the principle that man is essentially divine, is essentially a spiritual reality. So, many questions came up relating to this subject.

Secondly, there is one disease spreading in American society, especially among the youth, and that is drug addiction — taking all sorts of narcotics: L. S. D., marijuana, even heroin, and many other things. It is spreading from senior to junior students, and is prevalent even among high school students today. So, in many places, this was a pro-

minent subject for questions and answers. One such experience which I particularly remember was the one at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, on 22 November 1968, because it was very very striking — and that was my last lecture in that university. In the coffee-house of the university, we had a small gathering to begin with, but it became a hall-full audience as the discussion proceeded. It began in an informal way, but as soon as the discussion got under way, the whole atmosphere changed; everyone became involved. Students wandering here and there came and stood, and as the discussion proceeded, they became very earnest and serious-minded. It was a unique experience for all the participants.

There the question came up: the place of psychedelic drugs in human life, and particularly in religious life. 'Most of the students take drugs. What have you to say to this, Swami?' — that was the question. Then I had to say very seriously that it is highly harmful for the human body and mind. Taking drugs has no reference to man's spiritual life at all. It may yield some psychic state; but spirituality cannot be purchased by paying a few dollars for a drug. Spirituality is a complete transformation of human character. So our American youths should beware of the evils of this drug habit. Otherwise, I said, in three generations they will become unfit to hold the reins of this great civilization of today. That is how I warned the American youth, and they seemed to take it very seriously.

They said: 'Why not drugs? We in America say we have discovered a new way to man's spiritual growth, which ancient teachers like Buddha and Jesus never knew.' I replied: 'That may be the new American religion, but I don't accept it — we know its effects on man's body and mind. It spoils your body and mind. It makes you coma-

tose. It makes you lazy. It may give you some experience, and take you beyond physical awareness, but that is just an escape from the material condition of life. Don't depend upon it all the time. There may have been exceptional individuals who got some exceptional experience out of it and then, perhaps, left off the drugs and started on true religion in right earnest; but we should not depend upon that. Very often we shall be tied down to that level and become a slave to the drug habit, destroying our brain and body.'

So the students became quite serious that day and some of them asked, 'What shall we do?' Others said, 'Let us start a Vedānta Society in Pittsburg; it will be helpful to students.' One student purchased a set of our Vedāntic books saying, 'I want to start a library. Let these healthy ideas reach other students.'

I could see the serious response of the students, when the matter was put like that. In Vedānta we do not say: 'don't do this' and 'don't do that', simply because a thing is banned by some religion. We are not killjoys. If it is beneficial, we will certainly say 'yes', and if it is harmful, we will certainly say 'no'. The sensitive physical and mental constitution of young people will be harmed once and for all by these drugs. This is why we of Vedānta are concerned about the spread of this drug habit among the younger generation. It may not be so harmful to the older people, but to the young it is extremely harmful.

### *Youth Problem: America versus India*

*Question:* From your experience of these university and college meetings, what would you say are the significant differences between youth problems in India and in America?

*Answer:* One major difference is this, that our problems rise from our underdeveloped state, from our economically and socially underdeveloped state. Our problems are of getting jobs, work opportunities, and so forth. There is not money enough to spend even for a very modest living; whereas in America, it is different. There the problems arise from the excess of material goods. In fact, in America today, there is a reaction against what you may call the 'affluent society' concept. Many of the young people are highly sensitive. Their idealism makes them resist this concept of America's being an affluent society. So, even rich students, boys and girls, will come to the university very ordinarily dressed. They do not want to be told they are children of rich parents. It is a protest against the present social conditions. Wealth can create more problems for man, more serious ones sometimes, than poverty. That is what I saw in the contemporary American situation. Thousands of years of poverty did not destroy the spirit of man; whereas a hundred years of wealth may well do so. This is something writ large in modern experience.

In India, industrial development, economic opportunities, and so on, can save us from difficulties special to our situation. Though, even in these fields, we have our special problems, because, in our education, the aim of human life is not very clearly expressed in terms of our own philosophy. Ours is still only a bread-winning education. And being merely bread-winning, it chokes some of the higher springs of human life. So, in our behaviour, we become aimless. We just go along, not knowing where we go. If there is a person who is aimless, without a direction, and if he is full of energy, he expresses that energy in destructive ways. Much of the current wayward behaviour of youth in India is because of this aimlessness, this purposelessness, which is

already coming over the higher social groups. This is because no higher purpose has been shown to them. In India, by and large, we have enough philosophical and spiritual guidance available to us to help us out. If these ideas are widely scattered among the people, we can overcome our weaknesses, and achieve more economic development too. Then we shall catch up in the march towards human betterment, not only in economic terms, but also in ethical and spiritual terms. We can overcome these problems, because *we have the remedy,* and not the disease only. *India is fortunate in having the remedy along with the malady.*

That remedy is there in our philosophy and spiritual thought. But the way these are often presented, they are not capable of influencing the minds of our young people. We have to present them in a rational and scientific way, not in an authoritarian way. What I have seen myself in India is that when we address our students in terms of the rational philosophical content of our heritage, they immediately respond — but not through 'do's' and 'don'ts'. Today young people will never respond to 'do's and don'ts.' Anti-authoritarianism is the characteristic feature of all youth movements in both East and West today. Yes, we have a philosophy which is not based on any external authority, but on sheer rational conviction. How to put it across to the young people? That is our problem in India. We have the food: we have only to give it to the people, who are hungry for it. In other countries, on the other hand, you have to find even the food. This higher kind of food is for the spiritual nourishment of the human personality.

### *The Anatomy of Youth Frustrations in America*

*Question*: Do the youth agitations in America represent more a frustration than a new awakening?

*Answer*: It is primarily a frustration and slightly an awakening. Frustration is writ large. A highly materially-advanced society often destroys or atrophies certain vital dimensions of the human personality. There is a world-weariness which occasionally comes upon individuals and nations, as Swami Vivekananda had warned seventy-five years ago. The history of the world teaches us that a kind of world-weariness becomes evident in certain periods of a civilization's history.

Some such experience is that of Western civilization to-day. You find it very much in post-War United States—*world-weariness*. What is all this for? All this wealth, this power, and all this technical development — what is it all for? Even the students of the Harvard University, when they recently gave a charter of demands, expressed this sentiment. They do not want this defence industry. They do not want this higher technology. What is it all for? Where is the spirit of man, and what is happening to him?, they ask.

So, there is a fundamental search for the deeper meaning and significance of life. But, unfortunately, there is no adequate philosophy available which can canalize these idealistic trends in constructive directions. That's why, in America, we have the unique phenomenon of the 'drop-outs'. It is a contemporary term. They do not believe in, or belong to, the contemporary society; they are called drop-outs. Many young men and women are drop-outs. They do not feel happy in their society. But what do they drop-out into? Simply aimless wandering—'hippies' they are called. They do not belong to American society. But where do they belong? They do not know; so they become a problem to society, a problem to themselves. Some turn to crime, some to drugs, some to political action,

often violent political action. A few find their way to some higher spiritual idea. This is a problem of Western society in general, and of American society in particular.

At several meetings in the U.S.A., I had said that India had studied long ago the drop-out problem and provided for it. Some of the greatest men of Indian history were drop-outs. Buddha was a drop-out, I said! That statement was a surprise to them. He did not like the contemporary Indian society. What did he do? He had a constructive channel to express the drop-out idea. He became the pioneer of a tremendous renaissance in India, which, later, influenced the whole of Asia as well. These drop-outs were, many of them, creative personalities.

What is wanted is a channel to canalize the energies of the drop-outs. I myself am a drop-out; I said so in several lectures. From the social point of view, I am a drop-out. But I have a concern for society; I have a channel through which I can express my drop-out mentality and make it truly constructive. This the American tradition does not provide. It is a new experience for Americans. But I am sure, with the help of other civilizations, America will find a way of expressing these great new forces through constructive channels. So we discussed the problem intimately, and the students were deeply interested in such discussions. After an hour's lecture, there would sometimes be a three-hour discussion. Great interest is there. These are new ideas to them.

### *What can Vedānta contribute to American Civilization?*

*Question*: Is American civilization really going downhill? If so, what can bring about its new birth in glory? What role can Vedānta play in this regard?

*Answer*: There are intellectuals in America who are

dissatisfied with American civilization *as it is*. Even political leaders, including President Nixon, sometimes refer to American society as a sick society. It *is* sick. Some sickness is there; otherwise, how does one explain the crime, the sex mania, the drug explosion, the youth revolt, and so forth, and the general discontent of society? These are serious symptoms of some deep malady. The problem is to understand that malady and find a remedy. We need to deepen the whole concept of human excellence that lies behind modern civilization; that is the root of the matter. These symptoms are merely the fruits. And we must trace out the roots. What is man? What is he in his real nature? If that is not rightly sought and understood, no good is going to come by all the external palliative measures. By mere patchwork here and there, you are not going to solve the problem.

It is here, as a profound philosophy, rational and scientific, that Vedānta is going to have a great part to play in the reshaping of modern Western civilization. With many scientists and professors I sat, during this tour, and discussed *Vedānta and modern thought*. When they come to know what Vedānta is, they sincerely bow down to it as something wonderful, something lofty.

Then I said that, though we in India have discovered this profound philosophy of man, we have not made full use of it ourselves. We have yet to carry into effect certain vital practical applications of it. But Western people have greater efficiency; they have greater energy. Swami Vivekananda himself had said that, probably, they would make better use of this profound philosophy of man than even we in India. In the age in which we are living, this interchange of ideas, through which cultures become cross-fertilized, will give rise to tremendous new developments.

Modern Western civilization is in for a great change, a great development, through contact with the soul of Indian thought, that is, with Vedānta. This is the one philosophy that commands the attention of thinking people in the modern world. This I saw everywhere, whether in Communist countries like Czechoslovakia or Cuba, or Western democracies like America, England, or France — everywhere thinking people stand in reverence before the majesty of Vedānta, when they get an opportunity to know about it. It is so rational, so practical; it is so universal.

I was speaking to a group of professors and students in the University of Lima, capital of Peru, in South America. It is called San Marcos University. It is a Catholic University, the oldest university in South America. Unfortunately, due to student troubles, it had been closed since the previous February. I went there in August 1969. I spoke about Vedānta for half-an-hour. Then a science professor stood up, commented on it, and asked me: 'Swami, what you said just now is so philosophical, so rational, so scientific. Do you mean to say that this philosophy was developed in India ages ago? That is something surprising.' I replied: 'Yes, it was developed in India more than four thousand years ago.'

The West has yet to understand this tremendous philosophical contribution of India. This was my experience everywhere. But when they do come to know, they simply stand in reverence before it. I had many occasions to meet scholars, professors, philosophers, and scientists, in U.S.A. and elsewhere, and to discuss with them the philosophy of Vedānta. Once it is explained to them, I saw that they really appreciated this profound philosophy, the truths of which can stand the tests of rational scrutiny, verification, and experimentation.

Swami Vivekananda's definition of religion appeals to all such thinkers: 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.' Ethical sense, a concern for the other person, a spirit of dedication and service, all these come as by-products of that manifestation of man's innate divinity. If he develops only in his physical dimension, sometimes he may be fine, but sometimes he may be a source of tension to himself and of tension to others. He may become exploitative; that is the nature of man at the organic or physical level. The higher and deeper nature of man is what Vedānta preaches, through the manifestation of which newer and purer types of energies become available to man, by means of which he becomes capable of controlling and chastening these other energies developed at the organic level. Modern civilization needs another energy resource by which the energy released by science, technology, and socio-political processes can be disciplined and made creative and helpful for the fulfilment of man. Vedānta appeals to all such when it is presented in the light of modern scientific thought and in the context of modern social needs.

*Question*: Is world-weariness causing the average American to practise authentic spiritual disciplines and seek spiritual experience?

*Answer*: There are very few opportunities for people in the States for this kind of serious religion and for attaining authentic spiritual experience. Accordingly, they are not able to satisfy their spiritual hunger. The Protestant churches of various denominations, for example, do not have the capacity to give this kind of spiritual food to modern Americans, nor do they provide the right kind of spiritual opportunities. Protestant reformation has gradually, in three centuries, *reformed away* the higher spiritual dimensions of Christianity and reduced itself to Y.M.C.A., I said

in many meetings, adding that, Y.M.C.A. is a great institution in itself, but that Christian spirituality is more than that. Churches, of course, are sometimes full. That is because they have changed their policy. Instead of giving the spiritual food of religion, they recommend and arrange for some social action, some protest against the Vietnam war, or some such thing. Most of the church programmes consist of that sort of thing—what they call social action, social involvement. At many meetings, I had to say, people come to the churches to receive spiritual nourishment from them. If the churches are not primarily meant to fulfil that function, what else are they meant for?

There are other institutions to give man the other types of nourishment and involve him in other types of activity. If the churches do not give the things of the spirit, man is left empty. Even the Catholic churches have changed their approach. They also are engaging themselves increasingly in social action programmes to the neglect of the spiritual.

What man seeks in America today is not a social action programme, but spiritual nourishment, by which he can feel fundamentally nourished. It is like watering a tree. In many lectures, I pointed out: 'You do not water a tree by watering the flowers and fruits of the tree; you water a tree in a fundamental way by watering the roots of the tree.' Similarly, there is a root nourishment for the human personality, and that is religion, not as creed, but as spiritual experience and as spiritual growth. If that is given, other things are automatically taken care of. There have been a few contemplative Orders in the States. But they also are getting thinner day by day. Some of them are being closed down. But such Orders are also a protest, a protest against extreme worldliness and the resultant world-weariness, and indicate the swinging of the social pendulum to the other

extreme. Man has tried these two extremes in the past in both East and West. But Vedānta, as taught in the *Gītā* or by Swami Vivekananda, does not advocate that way, either.

One of the subjects, out of the circulated list of thirty, chosen by many universities for my lecture, was *Spiritual Life in an Industrial Age.* The *Gītā* teaching is: In the midst of your work, realize your own spiritual nature. That is the technique, that is practical spirituality. That is what Americans need, with an occasional experience of deeper communion through a spiritual retreat. That will bring great inner nourishment. When they experience it, they say it is wonderful.

This is true in India also. Many of our youths understand by religion what they saw their uncles or grandmothers or neighbours doing — taking a bath in the holy Gaṅgā early in the morning, going to the temple, offering some flowers, and so forth. The young people are losing faith in that sort of thing, especially when they do not see any sign of spiritual growth in the people concerned. But when they come to know what true religion means — a real spiritual growth through communion with your own inner Self — they understand that it is something wonderful. They want to have more of that experience. Even in India, we need this experiential approach to religion, this sense of communion. There is great need for these things, and students and teachers are eager for that kind of experience — even those who are not generally understood to be religious in the usual sense of the word.

### *East-West Cultural Exchange*

*Question*: In what way can India help the West and the West help India without either being egoistic or con-

descending?

*Answer*: This is the great work that was initiated in an enduring way by Swami Vivekananda towards the end of the last century. He was the first who taught India that no culture in the world was perfect. Each culture is just *an experiment in culture,* so that we have to learn from each other. He told India that Indian culture is great in many respects but it is not perfect. It has its limitations. It has specialized in certain fields and that specialization means that certain other aspects of human life have been neglected. India has paid a heavy price for specializing in the inner life of man. Our external life became neglected. The problems of modern India are essentially problems of man's external life; whereas in the West it is the reverse. Their inner life is neglected. Their external life is prosperous.

In many question-answer sessions, this subject came up. They said, 'Don't you think, Swami, you have your own problems in India?' I said, 'Yes, we have serious problems; but the difference between your problems here and our problems in India is this: We have a soul, a pure and mighty soul. We are in search of a good and healthy body for its expression. Our former body was so weak, unfit to express the infinite soul of India. So we have to try to develop a body-politic, healthy and strong. In your case, in the case of the West, you have a fine body and you are in search of a soul. Don't you think it is more difficult to find a soul than a body?' They said, 'Yes.'

The problem of finding a body is easier than that of finding a soul. In two generations, we can build up our industrial strength and achieve economic development. There is no mystery or difficult magic about it. Western help is also available for us in that field. Swami Vivekananda saw that this was the situation with respect to man in the

East and the West. So he told India: You have an eternal soul, give it a fine body now. Stress the dignity of man. Don't look to caste and creed; break these age-old shackles on man and let the Indian personality grow. Infinite possibilities are there in man; let them be expressed. Economic development, social improvement, everything will come. What a grand message he gave to India! He said to us in India: In order to implement these, take the help of the West. Sit at the feet of the West. Learn humbly what the West has to teach; for, he said emphatically, all the problems of the Indian body-politic are the problems that will dissolve only by India's *assimilating*, not imitating, the spirit of the modern West. This was his great message to India.

On the other hand, he said to the West generally and to America particularly: You have achieved a highly developed society but you are in distress within, your inner lives are empty. Here India has the means to help you. Your high development and affluence have failed to strengthen the inner man. Learn freely from India in that field. Thus, by mutual exchange of ideas and experiences and values, we shall develop, in this age, not a Western culture nor an Eastern culture, but a complete human culture in all parts of the world.

That is the great contribution of Swami Vivekananda: Equality between the East and the West, equality between their cultures, and cross-fertilization of cultures, thus developing a human culture out of all the racial and national cultures that we have had until now. What he said can be a vital lesson for all of us today in the East and in the West. He said:

> 'Teach yourselves, teach everyone, his real nature. Call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, everything great and

glorious will come, when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'

Thus will the personality-distorting privations and wants of humanity in East and West be removed. Vedānta helps to lead man to total fulfilment. Its message is as relevant in America as in India. This is a wonderful idea which we have to help to work out in the coming decades. Perhaps, before 2000 A.D., a good deal of this give-and-take will have taken place, because it has been going on intensively in the post-War period. Ideas are travelling fast here and there. People also are travelling all over the world. There are 7,000 Indian students in the United States today. What are they doing? Taking the best that America can give, most of them come back, though some of them do stay on there. When they come back, they bring the message of that vigorous Greco-Roman spirit, of which Swami Vivekananda spoke, that Promethean spark which will help to ignite a new fire in the Indian soul. It has, in fact, been helping India already in a large measure. Similarly, when Americans come to India, some of them see it in the spiritual perspective, and carry back something of that message. Our own Vedānta work is going on in the West. Other India-based institutions also are similarly working there.

A tremendous give-and-take is thus going on now. This is a vital period of the world's history. Exclusivism in culture and religion will all vanish, and more human ties will develop, binding together the strength of the West, which is science and technology, and the strength of the East, which is inward life and spirituality. This is the ideal and programme that Swami Vivekananda placed before us.

### *Indian Students in America*

*Question*: Just now you spoke of the Indian students who are studying in America. How do they represent the

essentials of Indian culture? What is the quality of that representation? And what can be done by way of improvement?

*Answer*: It is a very unfortunate situation. Most of the Indian students, and for that matter, most other Indians in the professions also, including our Foreign Services, though they are physically Indians, are not so mentally. They have so little of India in them. Many of them realize this defect only when they go to the West, because the West is asking them questions about the spiritual wealth of their own country. Westerners want to know something of India's culture and philosophy, but our people there then realize that they have nothing to give. Then it is that these Indians feel the inadequacy of their own previous education in India. It is unfortunate that, generally speaking, our education does not give us any insight into the fundamentals of our own culture. I saw in some places in the United States this kind of Indian youth, who is sometimes even apologetic about his own country and culture. But he is realizing more and more that, to be an Indian, however inadequately, is better than trying to imitate somebody else, trying to become a third rate carbon-copy American, whom the American never respects. This consciousness is slowly dawning on our people abroad. But it will take time.

Our Indian educational system should ensure that students get some idea of the philosophy and culture of India. They need not know all the details. That there is a rational philosophy of man centred in his innate divine nature; that some of its implications have been worked out before; and others remain to be worked out in this modern age; that they are worth working out in all parts of the world; that modern science and technology will help us to work

them out in an integrated way — these fundamentals of the philosophy of man in Indian culture must be known to all students in India. Then, when they go abroad with this inherent strength, they will be true ambassadors of India, with the capacity to help their companions in the West and to *assimilate* the strong points of Western culture and life and become true ambassadors of the West to India as well, thus forging golden links between East and West. That is not happening just now. Even our Foreign Services are inadequately trained in this sphere and, hence, make only marginal contributions in this field.

### *'Spare the Freud and Save the Child'*

*Question*: What do you think is the future of those Indians who have married Americans and settled down there? How is American life going to affect the future of their children?

*Answer*: There are quite a few Indians who are married to Americans and settle down there. And some of them told me of their difficulties in training their children. Their children get sucked into the stream of American society, some of the forces of which are harmful even to the American children today. Many Americans themselves are concerned on this score. 'What is happening to our children?' they ask. The children are carried away in the stream of American social life. Unfortunately, much of that social life is patterned on the Hollywood films and the ubiquitous TV; so it is a problem for American parents as much as for Indian parents in America, especially for those among them who have a spiritual view of the human personality. They do not know how they can cope with it; they feel baffled. The children, for example, very easily pick up the value-systems and jargon of the contemporary

American social scene. And sometimes they lose all sense of respect or reverence for anything in the social heritage—the reverence for mother and father, the respect for elders in general, including teachers and professors. And reverence for God, of course, is getting very rare. There is a sense of rootlessness, genetic as well as spiritual, arising out of the tyranny of the cult of individualism. These are the difficulties bred by a highly mechanized and industrialized civilization governed by a frankly materialistic philosophy. Sometimes I have heard children referring to their parents as 'the old guys'. The thinking of some of the children is: Those old guys have given us this body; but they are now old and done for—finished. Now we will have our own life.

That there is something sacred in the human personality—that is not to be found in their current philosophy of man though it is not entirely absent from the thinking and living of millions of the average citizens; but the current philosophy is definitely against them; so it becomes a real swimming against the current; and the current, in this case, is powerful, backed as it is by the thought forces of most of modern biology, psychology, and sociology.

The largest contributor to this human distortion is, what one may call, an exaggerated Freudianism, the product of the Freudian view of human nature. Freud was a scientist; he did advance the science of the human psyche; he was the pioneer, so far as the West is concerned, to take psychology from the conscious to the sub-conscious and unconscious levels of the psyche, and initiate a science of depth-psychology. But Western science in that field did not stop with him; nor were his pioneering efforts and conclusions revolutionary from the point of view of India's knowledge on the subject. India's depth-psychology had

not only discovered the dark sub-conscious and unconscious, and their impact on human thinking and behaviour in the conscious state, but had also penetrated deeper and discovered the truth of the super-conscious, the truth of the divine in the heart of man, which alone is the sanction for man's ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual life. Freudianism became stagnant when it refused to face new facts about human nature which were continually coming to light. And it refused to cast off its dogma of the essential sexuality of the human psyche, even when confronted by the ideas of some of Freud's own colleagues like Jung, who maintained that the psyche is not all the sexuality presents in its Id, but that there is something in the psyche that opposes the Id, resists the Id, and that something he would prefer to call 'spirit'; and that if 'spirit' was a vague term, so was 'Id'. So, to build a satisfactory philosophy of man on what Freud said, and to end up there, is to distort the human personality and the human situation. This has happened in the West, where Freudianism has long become a tyranny over the human mind. This is now being recognized by more and more people there.

What does Freudianism say? 'Here are the human impulses; give them free play; don't restrict or check them; don't discipline them; don't thwart them. All these mean the same thing. If you check them, it will create a traumatic condition in the human personality.' The statement is partly true and partly false; but Freudianism insists that it is wholly true. So, the parents dare not discipline their children; neither do they teach them to discipline themselves. And the teachers and the society also follow suit. All self-discipline disappears, along with the hated externally-imposed discipline.

The result is that a new philosophy has come up on

the American scene; it is called the 'impulse-release' philosophy. Whatever impulses rise up in the mind, release them; do not check them; do not discipline them; for, they are 'natural', they are fine. Naturally, these impulses mostly proceed from man's organic nature; they are the impulses of the organic man; and there is nothing higher than the organic. So it generally ends up in a life at the physical level, life more and more restricted to organic satisfactions. And even those who express values higher than mere organic satisfactions — and there are millions of such — have to sustain themselves, have to swim, against the current of the prevailing dogma of Freudianism.

But some of these latter are beginning to react; they are beginning to see the seriousness of the situation. I often used to quote the pungent saying of one of them, a President of one of the U. S. universities, in some of my lectures, with telling effect. I had read that saying somewhere and was impressed by it. He said: We had an old dictum: Spare the rod and spoil the child. We have now wisely discarded that dictum; we have substituted love and kindness in place of fear and corporal punishment in the field of education of children. That is fine. But we now need a new dictum to inspire our education; and that new dictum is: *Spare the Freud and save the child!*

If you want to save the child from personality distortions, Freudianism has to go. You have to educate the child to restrain his or her native impulses, discipline himself or herself, so that the energies of the personality can be raised to a higher level of expression. Is there such a higher level? This is the crucial question of the modern age and its rational answer lies in Vedānta. Vedānta brings to man the conviction, not just the belief, that there *is*. This is the conclusion of India's philosophy of man in depth; it is a conclusion

which is open to verification by any one. It is here that Vedānta comes into the picture in the modern age and imparts to modern man a rational conviction that there *is* a higher dimension to the human personality above its obvious physical and organic one.

### *The Portland Radio Interview*

I was dealing with the problem of overcoming the evils of the tyranny of Freudianism in modern society. Fortunately, this tyranny has started getting resistance from thinkers in the West itself; and I have already mentioned one such protest. The evils of this tyranny have affected, *and afflicted,* not only education, but also literature, art, and society in general. I came across one aspect of this evil during a two-hour interview at the KGW radio of Portland, Oregon State, U.S.A. on Friday, 31 January 1969. We have a Vedānta Society in Portland, presided over by Swami Aseshananda. I stayed there for a week as his guest. Among the various engagements he had fixed for me, in and around the city, was a twenty-minute interview at that radio station. But the interview continued for full two hours from 10 p.m. to midnight due to the interviewer, Mr. F., getting deeply interested in the theme of the interview as it proceeded. Mr. F. was a dynamic young man, critical of all religion, suspicious of all yogis and maharshis, a man with deep convictions and love of truth, somewhat aggressive, and of the 'drop-out' type. Some people had earlier warned me that he would be difficult to deal with, and so forth. But I had said that that did not matter since he was possessed of a love of truth and was frank, as many people of the 'drop-out' type are.

The interview began with his introduction of me to the listeners. As happens in all cases where yogis and spiritual

teachers, especially from India, are interviewed, the introduction starts on a light note. So introducing me to the listeners, Mr. F. said: Oh, here is another Swami in front of me! He is so and so, etc., etc. But, within a minute, the whole aspect changed, as I gently changed the subject into the problem of man in modern civilization and other serious topics. Mr. F. immediately caught the inspiration of the new situation and shouted into the microphone: Oh, this is a new type of Swami! Please listen to what he says! All flimsiness vanished immediately and, from then on, it was earnest and serious discussion till the end.

And in the course of the next few minutes of the interview, I had occasion to refer to the need for a measure of self-discipline on the part of modern man. No sooner had I uttered the word 'discipline' than Mr. F. interrupted me and protested loudly into the microphone: Oh Swami, we don't believe in all this discipline! What is there to discipline? We believe in being *spontaneous, natural!*

He uttered these words in a triumphant manner and with a touch of hilarity. But I was not put out, but at once grasped the whole background of thought behind his remark, and said: Mr. F., you were highly appreciating, just a few moments ago, Pandit Ravi Shankar's beautiful sitar music. How fascinating, how *spontaneous*, how *natural*, is his music, you had said. That's fine, I said, and continued: But did you ever stop to think even for a moment, Mr. F., that behind that spontaneity and naturalness of Ravi Shankar's music, there lie years and years of hard discipline? Did you ever give a thought to that?

As soon as I had put it that way, Mr. F. became excited and literally burst into the microphone to say: That is a wonderful idea! I had never thought of it that way! This is something new! I do realize the importance of discipline

from that point of view. And he exclaimed into the microphone: All of you, listen to what the learned Swami from India has to say!

By this time, the scheduled 20 minutes period was ending; but his interest in the discussion, on the other hand, was just mounting; and he asked me sweetly, and in the hearing of his listeners, for, the whole programme was a live transmission: Swami, are you tired? Can we continue the interview? No, I am not tired at all, I replied; I am ready to go on as long as you like. At this he was happy, and announced it into the microphone.

Continuing the theme, I said: Mr. F., I also appreciate naturalness and spontaneity. Human life should be natural, spontaneous. But I discern two types or two levels of spontaneity and naturalness; one lies below discipline, and the other lies above discipline. And, for the next several minutes, he was an absorbed listener, putting an occasional question or re-stressing a point I had made, as I was expounding this theme in the light of Vedānta and twentieth-century biological thought.

The animal is spontaneous and *natural*, I continued; the cow or horse eases itself wherever it stays or moves. That is one type of naturalness. But do we not subject a human child to a bit of toilet discipline? That is the first lesson we give to all children, followed by other disciplines, first given to children by parents from the outside, then given by children to themselves, so that they may rise to the level of *human nature* and develop the human way. All culture is the product of the discipline of impulses; and culture is specifically a human phenomenon; animals have no culture. By such judicious discipline, guided by reason and love of truth, *man manifests the higher and higher aspects of nature, first the human, then the divine, from within him-*

*self*. And the whole of such discipline of impulses, and the manifestation of the divine within, *can be as natural and spontaneous a process* as the expression of impulses at the organic level, when we understand the wide range of the meaning of the words 'nature' and 'natural'.

Two types of people, I continued, do not need discipline or do not experience tension and struggle, and are perfectly natural and spontaneous; and I quoted the following well-known verse from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* the greatest book on *bhakti,* or pure love of God, in the Indian tradition, to explain the point (III. 7.17):

> *Yaśca mūḍhatamo loke yaśca buddheḥ param gataḥ;*
> *Tāvimau sukham edhete kliśyatyantarito janaḥ—*

'Two types of people experience happiness and are free from all tension, namely, the uttermost fool among men (in whom the struggle for humanness has not yet commenced), and the one who has gone beyond *buddhi,* intellect or reason, (in the *experience* of the Ātman, the infinite divine Self, and the transcendence of both animal and human nature). All others, in between, are in varying stages of tension and struggle.'

At the highest level, that of a Buddha, Jesus, Ramakrishna, or Kṛṣṇa, there is no tension or struggle; everything is again natural, spontaneous, as it was in the baby. But there is a vast gulf between the naturalness and spontaneity of the one and of the other; and that gulf has to be crossed, *and that crossing can be graceful and joyous,* and is meant to raise human psychic energy to higher and higher levels of existence and expression. *This is spiritual growth,* this is evolution at the human stage, says Vedānta. *It is psycho-social evolution,* says twentieth-century biology, in which organic evolution, in man, rises to ethical and spiritual

heights, just as, earlier, cosmic physical evolution rose, in the living cell, to its organic dimension. *This struggle, this discipline of raw impulses, cannot be removed from human society without reducing it to stagnation at the animal level.*

But this is precisely what modern Western society is reducing itself to, under the mis-guidance of its philosophy of man, that he is exhausted in his physical body, and that organic satisfactions constitute his highest end. That is why all discipline, including self-discipline, is a bugbear to modernist man; and that is also why he is empty within, and a focus of tension and sorrow and unfulfilment, in spite of his vast knowledge and technical efficiency, wealth and power.

Mr. F. was impressed. His frankness and love of truth shone in his immediate rejection of a current fashionable dogma about man upheld in Freudianism, as soon as he got acquainted, for the first time, with a profound truth about man and his possibilities, discovered first by the ancient Indian sages of the Upaniṣads. Thereafter, every question was put by him with great consideration and a sense of involvement, in the sense of being not a mere interviewer, but a participant in the exposition; and a real spirit of naturalness and spontaneity entered into our mutual relationship then and there.

The interview ended at midnight, after I had answered some questions from listeners, far and near, conveyed through the telephone, Mr. F. generously assisting me in tackling the meaningless ones among them. As we rose from our seats, his wife entered, and he introduced us to each other. Then I said to him: Mr. F., you have not seen our Vedānta Society in this city of Portland. Swami Aseshananda has asked me to address his 11 a.m. Service next Sunday. Please come there on the occasion, and bring

along Mrs. F. also. He said: We shall try. And I took leave of them.

Next Sunday, 2 February, at 9 a.m., people started arriving at the Vedānta Society to attend the Service. And one of them came forward to me and said, with a touch of excitement: As we were coming, we just heard over the radio in our car the voice of Mr. F. announcing your 11 a.m. lecture and telling his listeners: please do go and attend the Swami's lecture on *Swami Vivekananda's Message to the West;* there is still time to reach the Society!

And as Swami Aseshananda conducted me to the Society's auditorium at 11 a.m., I was happy to find Mr. and Mrs. F. sitting on the front row, along with their child; and we silently exchanged our greetings.

### *The Creative Power of Tapas*

This is one out of many instances of the impact of the approach of Vedānta, as expounded by Swami Vivekananda, on thinking minds. *Vedānta needs to be presented in the context of modern thought and modern needs.* Then no thinking person will say no to it. Vedānta is not a killjoy philosophy and discipline. It is the philosophy of, what William James calls, healthy-mindedness. The ultimate reality it preaches, Brahman or Ātman, is of the nature of *sat-cit-ānanda,* existence-knowledge-bliss; it is the Self of man and nature; and *the search for God becomes a search for the truth hidden in life, and a search suffused with joy.* To the question: why should I discipline my psychic energies and impulses, the answer of Vedānta is: to grow spiritually and to manifest the divine possibilities within, and achieve — in a single life-time, through the help of nature's and her evolution's most precious gift to man, namely, intelligence, what nature herself and her evolution will take

billions of years to achieve, namely, spiritual freedom.

In my lectures and talks, I often used to refer to the Sanskrit word *tapas*, which may be translated, with some reservations, as self-discipline. If this value is properly presented, no thinking person can object to it. The Vedānta philosopher Śaṅkarācārya (788-820 A.D.), in his commentary on the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*, quotes a beautiful definition of it from the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*:

*Manasaśca indriyāṇām ca aikāgryam tapa ucyate;*
*Tat śreyaḥ sarvadharmebhyaḥ sa dharmaḥ para ucyate—*

'The concentration of the energies of the mind and the sense organs is called *tapas*. Among all *dharmas* (ethical and religious disciplines), it is the most excellent; it is, in fact, the supreme *dharma*.'

So defined, it becomes the stimulus behind every great movement in life, every creative achievement, whether in the field of science or art, social endeavours or spiritual life, as I have shown in some detail in my *The Message of the Upaniṣads*. If this is *tapas*, who will say no to it, except those who have got stuck up at the organic level, at what Vedānta terms the *samsāra* level, where there is much energy and movement without any onward direction. This is what I would specially like to stress, that these verified and verifiable truths of Vedānta need to be presented in a rational and practical way, and not as a set of mere do's and don'ts.

### *Response to American Doubts about India*

*Question:* What is the opinion of Westerners, particularly the Americans, with regard to social and political conditions in India?

*Answer:* Many universities and colleges in the States

chose, as one of the subjects of my lecture and discussion, out of the circulated list of 30, the subject of *Tradition and Social Change in Modern India.* It is an important subject from the point of view of the modern world, how a sixth of the human race is facing the challenge of the modern age. In Cornell, in Stanford, and in some other universities, this subject formed the theme of the lecture, followed by animated discussion. A great change is sweeping over traditional Indian society today; it is in the grip of a transition, more revolutionary than it has ever faced in its millennia-long history, in the wake of its industrialization measures, scientific and technical developments, and vast democratic processes. What is going to happen to India, to its age-old tradition, in that modern context, was a question that many put to me during these sessions. Among them were those who coldly calculated that India would be washed away in the modern current, like all other nations affected by this current, and those others who felt that such a contingency would be disastrous to all mankind, from a spiritual point of view.

I had to agree that uncertainty was there; that, in the modern current, India may go the way of the West and give up her spiritual heritage and become materialistic. But I also pointed out that her ancient spiritual tradition has a strength behind it, deriving from a rational and scientific philosophy, Vedānta; and secondly, that the Indian tradition today does not live entirely on the strength of its past heritage; but that it has produced, in this modern age as well, giants of spirituality and intellect, who have given to this ancient tradition a new authenticity, a freshness, a new dynamism, a new orientation, before our very eyes; there have appeared a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda, and a host of other lesser luminaries. Through them, the Indian tradition

has acquired a new spiritual strength and confidence to steady its feet in the welter of the modern revolutionary transition.

We should remember, I said, that Swami Vivekananda had welcomed these changes, welcomed modern science, technology, industry, and democracy, as integral parts of his practical Vedānta. He welcomed these in the interests of, what he termed, *'a toned down materialism'* for his country, for the redemption of its millions from the curse of poverty and general backwardness. But he had pointed out that these changes were meant to be the means, and were necessary, for the enhancement of the one supreme treasure of the Indian people, namely, their spirituality. And he gave to modern India his philosophy of *Practical Vedānta* to help her people and the rest of the world to control and discipline the forces of modern technology and industrialism in the interest of man's spiritual growth.

And since this subject refers to something very vital to both East and West, it will be illuminating to listen to Vivekananda himself for the guidance he gave to India in this field. Though a bit long, it bears reproduction in this context.

Replying to the welcome address given by the people and Raja of Ramnad, on the southern tip of India, on his return to his motherland from the West in January 1897, Swami Vivekananda said (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. III, tenth edition, pp. 148-154):

'From out of many voices, consonant and dissentient, from out of the medley of sounds filling the Indian atmosphere, rises up supreme, striking, and full, one note, and that is renunciation. Give up! That is the watchword of the Indian religions. This world is a delusion of two days. The present life is of five minutes. Beyond is the infinite, beyond this world of delusion; let us seek that. This

continent is illumined with brave and gigantic minds and intelligences which even think of this so-called infinite universe as only a mud-puddle; beyond, and still beyond, they go. Time, even infinite time, is to them but non-existence. Beyond, and beyond time, they go. Space is nothing to them; beyond that they want to go; and this going beyond the phenomenal is the very soul of religion.

'The characteristic of my nation is this transcendentalism, this struggle to go beyond, this daring to tear the veil off the face of nature and have, at any risk, at any price, a glimpse of the beyond.

'That is our ideal; but, of course, all the people in a country cannot give up entirely. Do you want to enthuse them, then here is the way to do so. Your talks of politics, of social regeneration, your talks of money-making and commercialism—all these will roll off like water from a duck's back. This spirituality, then, is what you have to teach the world.

'Have we to learn anything else? Have we to learn anything from the world? We have, perhaps, to gain a little in material knowledge, in the power of organization, in the ability to handle powers, organizing powers, in bringing the best results out of the smallest of causes. This, perhaps, to a certain extent we may learn from the West.

'But if any one preaches in India the ideal of eating and drinking and making merry, if any one wants to apotheosize the material world into a God, that man is a liar; he has no place in this holy land, the Indian mind does not want to listen to him. Ay, in spite of the sparkle and glitter of Western civilization, in spite of all its polish and its marvellous manifestation of power, standing upon this platform, I tell them to their face that it is all vain. It is vanity of vanities. God alone lives. The soul alone lives. Spirituality alone lives. Hold on to that!

'Yet, perhaps, some sort of materialism, toned down to our own requirements, would be a blessing to many of our brothers who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the mistake made in every country and in every society, and it is a greatly regrettable thing that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on people who are not ready for them has been made of late. ... But for that, a good deal of the poverty and the misery that you see in India need not have been. A

poor man's life is hemmed in and bound down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off! Let the poor fellow enjoy himself a little, and then he will raise himself up, and renunciation will come to him of itself. Perhaps in this line, we can be taught something by the Western people. ...

'But remember that as Hindus everything else must be subordinated to our own national ideals. ... The secret of a true Hindu's character lies in the subordination of his knowledge of European sciences and learning, of his wealth, position, and name, to that one principal theme which is inborn in every Hindu child — the spirituality and purity of the race. ... As long as this principal function of our life is not disturbed, nothing can destroy our nation. But mark you, if you give up that spirituality, leaving it aside to go after the materializing civilization of the West, the result will be that in three generations you will be an extinct race; because the backbone of the nation will be broken, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built will be undermined, and the result will be annihilation all round. ...

'Therefore, whether you believe in spirituality or not, for the sake of the national life, you have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch the other hand out and gain all you can from other races, but everything must be subordinated to that one ideal of life. And out of that a wonderful, glorious, future India will come — I am sure it is coming — a greater India than ever was. Sages will spring up greater than all the ancient sages.'

We have that philosophy in India that can discipline modern materialism. First of all, there is no dichotomy in our philosophy between man's secular life and his spiritual life. The *Gītā* teaches man to see life as one. It does not view man's life at the organic level as evil. It is treated as valid and authentic; and so is his inner spiritual life. In the authentic philosophical tradition of India, in the spiritual teachings of books like the *Gītā,* these contradictions, arising from partial and segmental views of life, are reconciled. And this is the special strength of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. It finds expression in a concise statement by

his Irish disciple, Sister Nivedita, in her Introduction to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I:

'The many and the One are the same reality perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes; or as Sri Ramakrishna expressed the same thing, "God is both with form and without form. And He is that which includes both form and formlessness."

'It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point not only of East and West, but also of past and future. *If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone; but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.* (italics not author's).

'This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma (work), not as divorced from but as expressing, Jñāna (knowledge) and Bhakti (love). To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality. All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction. "Art, science, and religion," he said once, "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth." But in order to understand this, we must have the theory of Advaita (non-duality).'

Therefore, there is a chance, and a good chance, that India will overcome the challenges of the present age, develop industrial and economic strength, yet not lose its own soul. This question related to a subject that was a matter of concern to many friends in the United States, Canada, and other countries, so they asked it again and again.

*Contemporary Western Reassessment of Christianity*

*Question:* How does Christianity fare in the Western countries in the present world situation?

*Answer:* Christianity is passing through a tremendous revolution within itself, the type of which it has never experienced in its long history. Even the Renaissance and the Reformation from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries were mild in comparison with what is happening today. A real root-and-branch change is coming over Christianity, and Christian Churches are alive to it; they are trying to ride the storm. In this context, there are sensitive Christians who realize that, for making something valuable out of this transition, the contribution of Indian thought is going to be very great. Many Christians realize that their religion has been, these two centuries, an uncreative passive entity moulded and shaped by the non-religious forces released by the socio-political developments and the physical sciences of the Western world. They realize that Christianity has ceased to be creative, and in order to make it a creative force in Western life once again, it needs to be interpreted in spiritual terms; and they seek the inspiration for this in Vedānta and for its expression in Sri Ramakrishna. Many Christians realize that some of the dogmas which they have upheld so long as central to Christianity cannot stand rational scrutiny. The Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church has already removed several of these untenable dogmas. This reassessment of Christianity, which is going on even in the erstwhile monolithic Catholic Church, is going to be of profound consequence to Christians as well as, through them, to non-Christians. It is a slow process.

After my one-hour speech on 'The Christ We Adore' at the Pacific Theological College, an inter-denominational mis-

sionary training institution for the South Pacific region, in Suva, Fiji, on 15 October 1969, during which, and during the stimulating question-answer session that followed, I had pointed out to the need to utilize the present crisis in Christianity to evolve a universal spiritual Christianity, in tune with the universal spirit of Jesus, from out of the erstwhile militant and colonial type of Christianity, by building it on, what Vedānta considers to be, the three central teachings of Jesus, namely, The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God, and Be ye therefore perfect even as the Father which is in heaven is perfect, instead of on original sin, atonement, and 'the only begotten son of God' concepts, the Vice-Principal, in the course of his vote of thanks, had said: After hearing the Swami, I think we should have a second look at our own theology.

This having a second look at Christianity is already going on; and if a little Vedāntic leaven has entered into Christianity, it is only to ensure that that second look does not denude Christianity of most of its transcendantal, truly spiritual, elements, reducing it to a mere ideology and platform for social reform. It is difficult to predict what will be the shape of things to come out of the present ferment in this great world religion; but one thing can be safely predicted; it is that the effect of Indian influences will be wholly to make Christianity more spiritual and more universal.

### *The Vedāntic Leaven in Christianity*

*Question:* Do you think that the Church is aware of the influence of Indian thought?

*Answer:* Most of them do not know that behind this tremendous reasssessment of Christianity, there is the force of Swami Vivekananda, the positive force of his Vedānta,

When we study, independently and objectively, the whole phenomenon, we find that the fundamental positive force behind the current revolution in Christianity is the contact of this religion with Vedānta through Swami Vivekananda. The negative forces behind it are what were released by modern science and Western materialism. Christianity, as I said earlier, has never experienced such a challenge before. The problem of the relations among its own denominations, and between it and other world religions, has been endemically explosive. But today there is a desire to patch up, if not resolve, all these differences between the denominations, create a sense of internal unity, a sense of Christian unity, and use it, not as before, to threaten other world religions but to project it on to the plane of Christian-non-Christian relations in an ecumenical spirit.

No, this process has no sanction in, nor guidance from, the two-thousand-year history of Christianity. It has to be traced to other sources. And what other source can the world find in this field than India? And so the first source of this orientation in contemporary Christianity is the impact of Swami Vivekananda's speech at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions at Chicago, the impact particularly of these concluding prophetic words (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I, thirteenth edition, p. 24):

'If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".'

That little Vedāntic leaven, entering the Christian heritage, is slowly transforming it, under the compulsions of the modern age. Christianity has been compelled to re-assess itself due also to the indifference of modern man to all religion.

This is a great chapter that modern Christianity is writing for itself. Here you find, when you trace it, the healthy Vedāntic influence. But, unfortunately, as Vivekananda has pointed out, you cannot pin-point this influence; for, being a truly spiritual influence, it is a silent influence. Indian influences have been generally silent ones; hence they cannot be traced from historic records. What do we find recorded in history? In several lectures in the universities in the West, I had referred to this subject. What finds prominent mention in records of history? An invasion or an aggression, a violent revolution or a genocide. These find their way to the records of history more easily than the silent creative influences. Speaking partly in humour, I used to add that thousands of families live happy peaceful lives; when a husband and a wife live a happy peaceful life, they do not become fit subjects for newspapers' reporting; but as soon as a husband and his wife fall out and quarrel violently, it finds its way into the headlines of newspapers. Much of what is recorded in history is of this type; they may be facts, but they may not be as significant as some other unrecorded facts, in the long perspective of history. Many good things, creative movements, silent events are rarely recorded in history. The crucifixion of Jesus finds a cursory mention or two in Roman history, but none at all about his holy life and its holy influences on the lives of the people around.

Indian influences abroad have been, and are, of this silent nature. I used to refer to Swami Vivekananda's utte-

rance on this subject during my lectures (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. III, tenth edition, p. 110):

'We never preached our thoughts with fire and sword. If there is one word in the English language ... to express the effect which the literature of India produces upon mankind, it is this one word, *fascination*. It is the opposite of anything that takes you suddenly; it throws on you a charm imperceptibly. To many, Indian thought, Indian manners, Indian customs, Indian philosophy, Indian literature are repulsive at first sight; but let them persevere, let them read, let them become familiar with the great principles underlying these ideas, and it is ninety-nine to one that the charm will come over them, and fascination will be the result. Slow and silent, as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of the calm, patient, all-suffering spiritual race upon the world of thought.'

And such has been the contribution, during the last 75 years, of Indian thought to the refashioning of modern Christianity. The truth of this will be recognized by the Christian leaders themselves within the next century. To-day some are recognizing it, like the Catholic Father, Robert Campbell of Chicago, who addressed the Symposium of Religions in Chicago in September 1968, as referred to earlier.

### *Western Christianity in the Light of the Śruti-Smṛti Concept of Hinduism*

*Question*: In the light of the recent encounter of Christianity in the West with other faiths, what do you think should be the mode of expression for religion in the contemporary world?

*Answer*: I often explained in several parlour talks, public lectures, and question-answer sessions, and now more extensively in my newly published book, *The Message*

*of the Upaniṣads,* in its very Introduction, and in several passages in my *Eternal Values for a Changing Society,* the point that Swami Vivekananda has emphasized, that every religion has two aspects: one, central, essential, and fundamental; and the other, non-esential and peripheral. The peripheral is what the Indian tradition calls the *smṛti* content of a religion. Its do's and don'ts do not have relevance for all ages and for all peoples; they must change as conditions change. But what the Indian tradition calls the *śruti* content of a religion, the fundamental, the essential, is eternal. This constitutes the abiding spiritual message of a religion, of every religion.

With respect to the peripheral or the *smṛti* aspect of religion, there is need for change or adaptation. The wisest policy for any religion, if it seeks to be creative and progressive, if it is not to become a Procrustean bed to twist and maim the personality and life of its followers, is to stress the fundamental, the *śruti* aspect, and soft-pedal the non-essential, the *smṛti* aspect. When this is done, religions will become capable of co-operating with each other and with their own denominations, and of responding to the spiritual needs of the new times. What creates the differences, and wide gulfs, between religion and religion, and between denominations within the same religion, is the presence and dominance of the *smṛti* element, of an over-emphasis on the *smṛti* element. What is it that separates the Catholics and the Protestants in Christianity? Not certainly the *śruti* content of Christianity; for, that content is universal, even crossing the limits of Christianity itself, what to speak of its denominational barriers; but it is its *smṛti* contents that separate. The denominations have been, and still are, at loggerheads with each other only on the basis of their several *smṛti* contents. The Christian denominations

today are wisely struggling to overcome this dominance of their *smṛti* contents, and stressing the primacy of the *śruti* content, and forging thereby a Christian ecumenical unity. We shall find enough of this *śruti* element in all the religions of the world to bring them all close to each other in harmony. Purity, love of God, love of man, compassion, service — why, these are the essentials and universals in every religion; they bind man to man and religion to religion.

The Hindu tradition has wisely provided for periodic changes of its *smṛti* elements, and continuance, more brightly and effectively, of its *śruti* elements. This great idea of the Hindu tradition finds a beautiful modern endorsement in a statement of Sri Ramakrishna: 'The Mughal coins have no *currency* under the (East India) Company's rule.'

When a tree grows, the bark also grows along with it. If the bark does not grow along with the tree, the bark will choke the tree. And if the tree is healthy, it will shed that bark and grow a new bark for itself. Similar is the case with all traditions; they must grow. Vast changes have come over the face of human society everywhere. An entirely new situation has arisen. Every tradition needs to re-interpret itself in terms of this new situation. This, Hinduism has provided for. That is why Hinduism is called *Sanātana Dharma*, Eternal Religion; it continues in new ways, in new forms. It is ever-changing, ever-aging, but never old; and it never dies.

Even the Ramakrishna Movement, from the *śruti* point of view, is essentially the ancient Hindu tradition. But from the *smṛti* point of view, it is new. We of the Ramakrishna Order are, as I often express it, *spiritually* orthodox but *socially* heterodox. That is our position in all these matters. That is how and why we are able to go to foreign countries, mix with all peoples, and live in harmony with all non-

Hindus as much as with all Hindus. We have accepted these changes knowingly, and in the interests of both religion and society; otherwise, the old stagnation would have continued and imperilled the tradition itself. For, the Hindu tradition was stagnant till the beginning of the last century. But it is not so today. That is why, in all religions, including Islam and Christianity, there is urgent need to stress the *śruti* content. The *smṛti* content is necessary; but it has to be recast in response to the changed conditions and circumstances, and in the light of that *śruti* content.

*Question*: Does not even the *śruti* content itself differ somewhat between sect and sect and religion and religion?

*Answer*: No, no; there is no difference in the *śruti* content between religion and religion, between sect and sect. For instance, the need for purity of heart for spiritual realization. Jesus said: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Now this is a *śruti* content; it is a statement of spiritual truth; as such it is a *truth* and not a *personal opinion;* it is a scientific statement which can stand verification. It is a *vastu tantra* statement, based on the knowledge of *vastu* or an existing fact, and not a *puruṣa tantra* statement, statement based on the moods and opinions of a *puruṣa* or person, as explained by Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary to the first four aphorisms of the *Brahma Sūtras.* How shall we become pure in heart? That is up to us. There are different methods in the science of religion by which the ever-present truth of God in man can be realized: Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, Rāja yoga, Jñāna yoga—all these methods are there; each may choose what suits him or her best. That is the beauty of the *śruti* content of religion. There is no stereo-typed method. But in the *smṛti* content, everything is fixed and final. That is why conflicts come and the need

arises to recast the *smṛtis* in new moulds in response to the challenges of new ages.

### *Poverty versus Affluence in America*

*Question*: Is the poverty in America more cruel than the affluence in India?

*Answer*: Affluence in India there is. The number of people in India whose material wealth enables them to live a decent cultured existence totals at least 250 million, i.e., more than the total population of the U.S.A. But, unfortunately, this affluence exists in the context of the utter poverty of the remaining 350 million, of whom more than half are condemned to live at sub-human standards of abject poverty and misery. This is the dismal feature of Indian affluence which modern India is dead-set to eradicate.

For long, Americans did not believe that there was any poverty in their country. It is only during this decade that this truth, that there is real poverty in their affluent country, has dawned upon the American mind in a striking manner. Last year, several newspapers publicized this long-present poverty in America with pictures and long despatches. Real poverty and privation are there. According to these despatches about 25 per cent of the American population is really poor. But there is a relativity about it. The cost of living is high in America. If a person earns, say, Rs. 2,500 a month, his is a poor economic level, because the cost of living is very high. The poverty line in America is about Rs. 2,500 a month, as that cannot provide for the basic needs of a person. So people below that income level receive financial assistance from the State. Whereas, in India, incomes and wages are comparatively extremely low. The lowest income, according to recent estimates, is about Rs. 62 a year in India. The result is that we have much

real and visible poverty in India; and we have wealth also here in India, often ostentatious. And the gulf between the rich and the poor is very wide in India. I do not think that there is any other country where the gulf between the rich and the poor, as also between the literate and the illiterate, is as wide as in our India.

In America, they have this problem of poverty. It can be removed only by greater efforts on the part of the State to bring economic opportunities to these 25 per cent people at the lower economic levels. It is mostly the blacks and other minorities that are poor, apart from the 500,000 American Red Indians whose poverty and misery have been endemic for centuries. A proportion of white Americans are also poor. For the first time, the American nation has been confronted with the stark national problem of poverty in the midst of affluence.

In India, this is a story as old as the British conquest of 1757, and the economic exploitation and the policy of wealth-drain initiated in its wake. We have with us this legacy of a wide disparity between our rich and our poor to handle and to solve. Our greatest problem in India is how to bridge this gulf, how to raise our poor, 350 million of them, to a higher and more satisfactory economic and cultural levels with respect to diet, housing, education, and general well-being. Our problems are stupendous because of the numbers involved.

In America, it is not so stupendous or serious. If the money spent on the Vietnam war were diverted to removing the poverty of its 25 per cent, by providing them with economic opportunity, it could be solved. This is the line of argument in the current American student protest movements. The students argue that billions of dollars are wasted every year over the senseless and cruel Vietnam war;

in our own country, there is so much of poverty; why not divert the money here to brighten the lives of our own 25 per cent fellow citizens? That is one of the prime questions asked by the dissidents and protesters in America.

*The Problems of Black Americans in the Light of Vedānta*

*Question*: Cannot Vedānta serve the coloured people of America in a very substantial manner by putting across to them the idea that it is better to strive for the manifestation of the divinity in themselves than to strive for equality with the whites?

*Answer*: The black population of America is passing through a unique phase, a revolutionary phase, of their history just now. For the first time, they are realizing their identity as a human group. Till recently, they were just classed, what the common people in India used to be classed, as 'the masses', human beings without individual identity. But since the end of the Second World War, a tremendous awakening has come among the black population of America. They do not any more desire to trail behind the white people, to remain as just second class citizens of a white nation. They want to remain black; they are proud of being black, and of having a distinct black history, black culture, and black tradition. They want to develop their black manhood and womanhood. And within ten years of this awakening, this new philosophy has created a tremendous energy resource among the black population of America. It is something amazing and heartening to see their energy, their resourcefulness, their sense of confidence. In fact, Swami Vivekananda's message of Vedānta, without being taught to them, is finding a pronounced expression among the black people of America. Have faith in yourself; infinite power is lodged in every soul; this is the first

lesson of Vedānta and the first message of Swami Vivekananda to all men and women. Speaking in Madras in 1897, on his return from the United States and England, on 'My Plan of Campaign,' Swami Vivekananda said (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. III, tenth edition, pp. 223-24):

> 'Men, men, these are wanted; everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionized. ... For centuries, people have been taught theories of degradation. They have been told that they are nothing. The masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. They have been so frightened for centuries, till they have nearly become animals. Never were they allowed to hear of the Ātman. Let them hear of the Ātman — that even the lowest of the low have the Ātman within, which never dies and never is born —... immortal, without beginning or end, the all-pure, omnipotent, and omnipresent Ātman! Let them have faith in themselves. ... That brings out the God within. ... You have been told and taught that you can do nothing, and non-entities you are becoming every day.
>
> 'What we want is strength; so believe in yourselves. ... Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men!'

The American black man and woman today have faith in themselves, have graduated in this first lesson of Vedānta. Out of this will come the new development of black identity and black self-realization in America.

Eventually, there will be an integrated American society; I fully believe it. In the beginning, all developments in the establishment of their identity are being handled by the blacks themselves. There are many whites who want to help the blacks; but there are also many blacks who do not want to have any white man's help. We shall stand on our own feet, they say. In this we can see the Vedāntic teach-

ing, in its first phases, already in operation among the blacks. If man is essentially the Ātman, if he is the centre of infinite energy, he takes hold of that resource within him only through practising faith in himself, and not through depending on others nor through weeping and wailing.

*Malcolm X and the Black American Awakening*

This is happening in a big way among the American blacks today. I have read some of the literature of this awakening written by themselves. I was particularly impressed by one of them, namely, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. It is a remarkable book breathing this faith of the black man in himself. *The New York Times* wrote about it in these words:

> 'This extraordinary autobiography is a brilliant, painful, important book.'

But it is a terribly anti-white book. Any white man reading it is apt to feel frightened. Here is a sample of the passages scattered throughout the book and in his lectures:

> 'Yes, the whites came from England and landed on Plymouth Rock. But we blacks were brought as slaves from Africa; *and the Plymouth Rock landed upon us!*'

This is the type of language and thought that runs throughout this book and in his lectures; it is a frightening language and thought; but it is plain truth. Says M. S. Handler, himself a white American and a sympathetic student of Malcolm X, in his Introduction to the book: *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (page XII):

> 'His public performances on television and at meeting halls produced an almost terrifying effect. His implacable marshalling of facts and his logic had something of a new dialectic, diabolic in its force. He frightened white television audiences, demolished his Negro oppo-

nents, but elicited a remarkable response from Negro audiences. Many Negro opponents in the end refused to make any public appearances on the same platform with him. The troubled white audiences were confused, disturbed, felt themselves threatened. Some began to consider Malcolm evil incarnate.'

So in America today there is this experience of the bursting of a volcano of human pressures, of human sufferings, of human hatreds, and engulfing a whole society. That is the feeling you get when you know it at close quarters. If American wisdom and energy can understand and discipline and channelize these forces and create a new American integrated society, it will be a great human achievement, greater than its great technological achievements. But it is still far away.

I spoke once in a black college in the city of Dallas in the State of Taxas, the city that shot into special prominence as the venue of the assassination of President Kennedy. I had spoken in that college a few months earlier; but they decided to have a second lecture by me. And the friends there, Indians and Americans, decided also to present, and did present, some Vedānta literature to its students on the occasion: *Thus Spake Vivekananda* and *The Ramakrishna Mission: Its Ideals and Activities.*

And there, in the course of my lecture, I placed before them some of the Vedāntic ideas and quoted Swami Vivekananda, conveying his message of manliness, fearlessness, and strength, of faith in oneself, and so on. It was a great inspiration to its students and teachers; and they put relevant questions after the lecture.

This is just the beginning of such Vedāntic influences reaching the black population. At present, only a handful of black people come to the Services of our various Vedānta Societies in the States. But, in course of time, when they

become increasingly acquainted with the positive strengthening message of Vedānta, more and more will come. The philosophy and personality of Swami Vivekananda are bound to attract those who are seeking a new light to light the path of human fulfilment — a rational, universal, and practical philosophy. His Vedānta is so strengthening, is so purifying, as a philosophy. Thinking people will eventually gravitate to this philosophy, where man goes beyond little loves and little and big hates of everyday's unrefined life and experience, and finds his spiritual unity and kinship with the other man, irrespective of caste or race or sex, making for human integration in a big way that must come one day.

### *The American Proletariat*

*Question:* Is it a fact that American labour has the best of socialism without its sting, in the sense that it has trade unions with the right to strike, unlike unions in communist countries?

*Answer:* American trade unions have the right to strike; and American labour is highly advanced, not only in technical efficiency but also in actual economic terms. They are all highly paid. That is why they are not politically active. A trade union movement is generally a movement for improving the economic and cultural condition of the labour class itself. According to Lenin, the trade union movement by itself cannot capture political power unless it is aligned with the other political forces of a nation. The American trade union is very much concerned only with the economic and cultural development of its own members. It is not much interested in the political aspect. That is why it is very much just a trade union movement. As a labour movement, it has all the power to strike and to bargain for wages; and it always has bargained for better and

better wages. Fortunately, some of the American industrialists themselves have been pioneers in increasing the wages of the labourers in the interests of the industry itself, which depends upon increase in purchasing power of the people.

The economic and material level of the American working class is very high. American workers go on vacation to Europe, on Mediterranean cruises, and so forth—even a simple carpenter or plumber or bricklayer earns about ten or twelve dollars per hour, and enjoys these holidays. That is the position of American labour. Economically, it is very high; but if the spiritual and cultural level of a group is also to be raised, something more than mere economic or industrial development is necessary. Here comes the place of religion, not just as a creed or dogma, but as the means to the spiritual enrichment of the human personality. There is very little of this nourishment evident there. Much of their prosperity is wasted on drinks, and on other wasteful items, under the pressure of a philosophy of man that knows nothing beyond his physical dimension and its need for organic satisfactions.

### *'A Lustre in the Eyes of the Poor in India'*

This is a contemporary world-wide problem. I think it is beginning to confront India also, little by little. That is why Swami Vivekananda gave us the motto: 'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion.' If we destroy their religion, their spiritual life, we will bring them down to the animal level. Swami Vivekananda had high praise for the Indian working class people, because they are cultured refined beings, though poor and often illiterate. They are not drunkards, they are not criminals. We do not post policemen to watch over the poor people in India, whereas, in other countries, poverty is often associated with crime.

This is because spiritual culture was given to our people throughout the ages by our great saints and sages. And there is a light in their eyes, as remarked by Professor Galbraith, which one misses in the working class in many other countries in the West. As reported by Sri Shriman Narayan in his book: *Gandhi: The Man and His Thought* (pp. 39-40):

> 'I also recall a talk we had in the (Indian) Planning Commission with the eminent American Economist, Professor Galbraith, some years ago. ... In the course of our discussions, the learned professor remarked:
>
> "... In India, I have always found some kind of a lustre in the eyes of the poor peasantry. ... I have seen in the faces of the poor people in Indian villages a spirit of self-reliance and moral fortitude which, in a sense, enriches their poverty".'

So, through our industrial development projects in India, let us improve the economic standard of our labour, and also raise their educational level; but let us not forget that it is spirituality alone that will raise their cultural level and make them decent human beings.

### *India and the Latin American Peoples*

*Question:* Do you think that the people of Latin America (Central and South America) can more easily enter into the spirit of Indian thought and culture than those of European countries and of North America?

*Answer:* I travelled in eight countries of Latin America, including communist Cuba, in August-September 1969. Their Catholic tradition, which is a *bhakti* tradition, makes the people in these countries very emotional. There is in them great response to Indian thought today. No racial discrimination is noticed in Latin America. That is one important difference, in comparison with the North American tradition which is an Anglo-Saxon one. In North

America, one gets the impression that the whites feel they are racially superior to the black and brown; but not so the Spanish and the Portuguese, who colonized Latin America. Latin America has this impress of racial equality in a big way. In a country like Mexico, in a country like Brazil, they would not ask who you are. Many colours are there. They mix well. There is no racial problem.

As I said, the *bhakti* tradition makes them emotionally rich. I was deeply touched by the love and emotional warmth of the Latin American peoples, including the children, who thronged to hear me in many universities and public meetings. I was simply overwhelmed by their love. It is to be found in other parts of the Western hemisphere also; but it is present in a big way in Latin America. Just as in India, some provinces are more emotional, some less, so also is it in the Western hemisphere.

### *The Jews and Judaism in America*

*Question:* What do you think is the secret of the strength of the Jewish faith and the Jewish people?

*Answer:* The philosophy of the Jewish religion itself makes for hard work and confidence in oneself. It is a small community, and a select one, and normally it does not admit any other people into its fold. It is racially more pure than other groups. The Jews have remained essentially an exclusive community. That is the source of their group strength and that is also their problem in the world. The greatest number of Nobel prize winners are amongst the small Jewish community in the West, more especially in the U.S.A. They have been poineers in many fields and have had plenty of opportunities in recent times to express themselves.

In various parts of the world, long-standing restrictions

on them have been removed in recent centuries. As a result, they have come up again in a big way. And his philosophy tells the Jew to work hard; to have faith in himself. Their God has given them a mission, they believe. Their sense of mission brings out tremendous energy in the Jewish community. This sense of a world mission, the ethical fervour of the community, and the Jewish faith—these give the Jews a dynamism which expresses itself, in spite of oppression and hatred by other races. The Jews have risen up again and again. How many destructions, how many dispersals over the world, they have suffered again and again! Still they are strong, vigorous, and progressive; and often envied by others. Suffering has given them a dynamism. In America, there is a movement, a small movement just now, a fringe movement of the extreme rightists, on the lines of the Nazi movement in its racial overtones. One of its important objects is to drive away all the Jews from America. It is anti-Semitic. It is a small movement as yet; let us hope it will never gather strength. According to a long despatch entitled 'Rightists Planning Campus Action' published in *The Providence Journal,* a daily of Providence, Rhode Island state, U.S.A., for 26 May 1969, expounding the political philosophy and programme of a group called 'The National Youth Alliance' led by Mr. Louis T. Byers, the writer says:

'His offensive is rooted in a complex philosophy, propelled by a number of contemporary rightist authors, that "Western civilization" is imperilled and must be preserved from alien influences. That means mostly Jews, Negroes, and other non-northern European minorities. ...

'Mr. Byers' inspiration: the 619-page book *Imperium* by Francis Parker Yockey. ... It defines Jews, Negroes, (Red), Indians, and other assorted minorities, as "parasites" and "distorters" in the Wes-

tern body, and calls for fulfilment of the West's "cultural imperative" to remain pure, separate, and dominant.

'"*Imperium* is a great book", says Mr. Byers. "I read it once a year".'

### *Spiritual Education of Children in America and India*

*Question:* Did you visit any Sunday Schools in America? In view of the fact that the religious training of children at home is neglected in India today, do you think that it will be spiritually helpful to Indian children if this programme is adopted in India?

*Answer:* The Sunday School system is quite good. But what is taught in Sunday Schools in the United States and other Western countries I am not very happy about. In the past, most of the wrong ideas about other religions used to be inculcated in the Sunday Schools. Today, of course, there is less of that; not from choice, but because nobody cares for that sort of thing.

I was taken to a Sunday School of a Catholic Church in U.S.A. There is less and less of spiritual sermons in U.S. churches, including the Catholic ones, these days. The people find it too 'heavy'. But there are discussions of current social problems in sermons, including the Vietnam war. I spoke for just two minutes only to the children of that Sunday School. I told them a few spiritual truths—the divinity in the heart of man and how it can be manifested in one's life. The children responded wonderfully to these ideas and their enthusiasm was evident in the light in their eyes. The Catholic Father who conducted me was much impressed by their response to these spiritual ideas.

In India, there is vast scope for the spiritual education of our children through Sunday Schools. Already, they have been started in some of the Ramakrishna Mission centres in Calcutta, Delhi, Bangalore, and Colombo. There are

five hundred children attending the school in our Colombo centre, and about the same number in Bangalore. But that means that a lot of teachers possessing the new understanding of the teaching of religion, with a view to developing personality and character on a broad basis, are necessary. I have addressed many such teacher groups in India, when I have emphasized the need not to teach a child any of those among the traditional ideas of religion which may be questioned and may be found untrue by the child when it becomes older; otherwise, it will make the child atheistic and agnostic. We should teach children only things which they will increasingly realize to be true as they grow in age and understanding.

That means that most of the mythical ideas in religion must not be imparted, except those which are illustrations of essential spiritual truths, of which the central ones are the ideas of the innate divinity of man and his organic capacity to realize this truth. Children have to be put on the road of their spiritual growth; they have to be told that the manifestation of this innate divine nature in life and action makes for ethical awareness, social feeling, a sense of dedication, and efficiency — these are the central themes of a spiritual education. And through the examples of great spiritual characters the world has produced, these truths can be impressed on the minds of our children. We have to refashion our whole approach to child education in the sphere of religion and character development. Christianity also has accordingly to revise its Sunday School syllabuses and programmes.

### *The Resurgence of Post-War Japan*

*Question:* In 1945, Japan was a shattered nation in every sense. But today Japan is on the highest rung of

prosperity. On the other hand, in 1947, India was at the height of her glory, yet today we are where we were. What do you think are the reasons for this moulding of the destinies of the two nations in two different ways?

*Answer*: The reasons are three. They lie with the people themselves. The Japanese are a highly disciplined nation. They love work, hard work. They talk very little. They rarely spend their energy in expressions of emotion. I have rarely seen the Japanese quarrelling in the streets or shouting at each other. Now, due to the political troubles, there have come hatred and some amount of street fights. But they are always a silent people, a hard-working people; whereas in India, we waste a lot of our emotional energy in shouting and talking and frenzy and have not learnt to discipline our emotions and direct their energies to calm, silent, useful work, which is what Vivekananda defined as personality efficiency.

Secondly, we have become a sleepy nation. The philosophy we adopted for about a thousand years had the effect of putting us to sleep, of making us lazy. In the lectures, I often used to quote two lines of a German poet, the sentiments of which struck me as particularly true of our people during recent centuries: 'Sweet is sleep; death is better; but it is best never to have been born.' That is the state from which Swami Vivekananda worked hard to rescue us. Accordingly, we are slowly getting awakened to that sense of manliness and strength and the capacity for work, so characteristic of the German and the Japanese peoples particularly, and Western peoples generally. When we develop this, we shall surpass many others, because we are not wanting in intelligence. We have only to make it creative and give it a social direction. It is far away yet. Our people are sleepy even when they take a spade and work

in the fields or a pen and work in the offices. Part of this is due to their physical-diet deficiency, but much more to their philosophy-diet deficiency. That is why we are not highly productive, whether in the offices, fields, or factories.

But the Japanese, even if it be young girls or boys, are very hard-working and never waste energy in noise or talk. They have concentrated minds. When I was addressing the Tsurumi Women's College near Tokyo in 1958, about 1,000 girls were sitting in front of me on the floor in the Japanese way, with their legs bent backwards and sitting on their haunches. During an hour and ten minutes of the lecture and its translation into Japanese, not once did I see them changing position or turning their attention here and there. They have learnt to discipline their bodies and minds. That is true education, by which they get a *training of their minds,* and not a *stuffing of their brains* as we do in our education in India. And the Japanese are lovers of beauty and orderliness as well.

In India, when you address a group of students or even grown-ups, if only a bird passes nearby, the audience will automatically be drawn to that bird and forget all about you and your lecture. A mere bird can snatch away our mind because we have no discipline in concentration; we do not stress on the training of the mind. For us, education is more often not training of the mind but stuffing of the brain; there in Japan it is different. And the fruits also are different accordingly.

Thirdly, Japan has had a great advantage in the post-War years. She had to spend nothing on defence; America spent millions of dollars on Japan's behalf. And Japan made capital out of this particular situation. But this situation is changing now. Japan is slowly being forced by circumstances to assume her defence responsibilities herself.

But by now she has come to the highest level of production in industry and agriculture. In ship-building, she has beaten even England and America. Nearly twenty million tons she builds every year. That is a sign of national efficiency. *The character of a people is the product of their philosophy.*

But I have no doubt that the new philosophy that Swami Vivekananda has given us will transform the Indian scene. Really and basically, it is just an expansion and development of our own traditional *Gītā* philosophy. But this fruition will take some time. We have so much of the dead weight of the past to overcome. Then only will the new ideas take root and fructify. This is bound to come. *This modern age in Indian history is meant to make us efficient in every sense. This is the meaning of Swami Vivekananda's constant emphasis on man-making religion and man-making education.*

### *India versus Post-War Japan and the U.K.*

*Question:* Do you think that the American Occupation has done some permanent damage to the civilization of Japan? If so, what are the chances of Japan's overcoming those ill effects?

*Answer:* Japan is in a peculiar situation today. In fact, during my talks to groups in Japan, I had occasion to refer to this. Japan and England are in almost similar situations today, though the position of Japan is much more complex. Post-War Japan has yet to discover its mission in the modern world. With its defeat in the Second World War, the whole thought-world of Japan completely collapsed. Her traditional ideals, aspirations, and scale of values received a tremendous jolt. The nation does not know what its place is in the altered world situation. There is a groping in the nation to find this out. There is a search for the

abiding elements of its national tradition and what part she is to play in the completely altered world situation. And I am sure that, with its undiminished vitality and dynamism, Japan will discover it and become a positive international force before long.

It is here that India's contribution will play a great part in Japan's future. A new philosophy of man is needed there that will reorient the tremendous energy resources of the Japanese people. Following in the wake of the colonial powers of the West, these were used to destroy other nations politically, commercially, and even by military force. That whole energy needs to be directed to human ends within and without the nation, bringing happiness and welfare to the backward sections of the world population. But it needs the stimulus of a philosophy that has grasp of man above his physical dimension, his organic limitations. That is what Vedānta will bring to Japan. Already, in Japan, there are people who are responding to the Vedāntic message, especially among the younger generation, who read the books of Swami Vivekananda increasingly being published in the Japanese language.

This will be one more 'conquest' of Vivekananda, besides his 'conquest' of the West. Strength will come to the people from his great teaching of man's spiritual nature, a strength coupled with gentleness and compassion. During my speech at the Waseda University of Tokyo in 1958—it is a huge university of thousands of students—I had said: 'You tried to conquer America; but America conquered you. India is going to "conquer" America, and Japan too, but in a different way.' 'Yes, you may succeed as well', the students had said.

'Yes', I had gone on, 'but India will "conquer" through spiritual ideas, through love—that is India's way of conquest.

And we are going to "throw bombs" also on you in Japan; they will be "bombs" of books conveying rational and spiritually health-giving ideas and of nothing else. They are more powerful than atom and hydrogen bombs, but life-giving not life-destroying. The students had then responded: 'You please throw such bombs on us and we shall be very happy.' This process is going on since then. It will gather strength as decades pass.

England is in the same difficult position. The education of the English child for the last two hundred years, in its public schools and universities, was to equip him or her to rule the world. Today, that world is gone, along with that imperial mission. Today, England does not know what its mission is in the completely altered post-War world. There was a series of talks over the B.B.C. just a few years ago in its Reith Memorial Lectures. The speaker referred to this problem while dealing with the theme of *Britain Today*. And he said that Britain was in search of its new mission in the post-War era. In the meantime, there is the vacuum. And most of the ailments of the British body-politic today arise from this ideological vacuum. When the old world-mission was there, everything in Britain had gone off smoothly; but with that secure base shattered, due to the loss of empire, the nation finds its outgoing energies recoiling on itself. This gives rise to social tensions and troubles. Vivekananda had said, even with reference to India, that much of her internal problems arose from not having a world mission, from not seeking and finding a healthy channel to express her national energies outside, during the past few centuries. He was the pioneer to cut such a channel and give India back the awareness of a world-mission in tune with her historically-acquired capacity and individuality.

*Modern India's International Relations*

We have had no foreign policy for centuries. We must have one now — an active and positive one. What is a positive foreign policy for India? Not destroying other people, not aggression, no, said Swami Vivekananda. But she is to disseminate her *tested* spiritual and philosophical thought abroad. That is something vital: Live them at home and preach them abroad. During this world tour, I saw the truth of this statement of Swami Vivekananda.

Since attaining our political independence in 1947, we have increasingly sought help from the outside world for our own economic development; but we did not give to the world, in the required measure, what we have and what the world expects from us. Taking and not giving, is what constitutes beggary; and today other nations look down on India as a beggar. Some of the references to India which I came across in New Zealand and other countries depict conditions in India as worse than, say, in war-torn Biafra in Nigeria. I have heard of Indians being greeted sometimes in the streets of these countries by passers-by with the remark: Oh, you are from India; here are a few cents for your poor people!

We are seeking and getting aid from various countries; there is no harm in that. We do need economic aid, scientific aid, technical aid, from the developed world. Vivekananda asks us to sit at the feet of other nations and learn what they have to teach us. We are also helping other developing nations, according to our strength, through the Colombo Plan. But we have something else of vital value to share with the rest of the world. As soon as that is grasped, the situation becomes changed. *We have no political message to the rest of the world; we are at the receiving end in*

*this field.* But we have much to give in the field of philosophy and spirituality. This was convincingly demonstrated by Swami Vivekananda as the unique field of our dynamic foreign relations. Throughout India's long history, one of the important constituents of her foreign relations was the spread of her philosophical and spiritual ideas abroad. And, today, this work is so relevant, in that the rest of the world also seeks them. The Government of India is slowly realizing this.

This is how, I am sure, the whole scope of India's foreign relations will become crystallized as the decades pass by. This is on the lines shown by Swami Vivekananda. We need diplomatic relations, commercial relations, cultural relations, and all other types of socio-political relations with the rest of the world. But we need to forge another relationship with the rest of the world. That is the unbreakable bond of spirituality. *This can issue only from the rational universal dimensions of India's culture and experience.* This can issue only from the ever-healthy soul of that Eternal India, *Amar Bhārat,* which has fascinated the great minds of the world throughout the ages. Its work is the bringing of modern humanity close together in peace and harmony. That is the perennial Vedāntic contribution. India did it through Buddha for the whole of Asia in the past. And today she is called upon to render this service to the whole world in the wake of what she did through Vivekananda at the close of the nineteenth century. *When this is grasped by our nation today, it will regain its self-respect and faith in its own destiny, and this will have a wholesome impact on her developmental efforts in the domestic field as well.*

I was received with honour and love all over the world. That was because I represented that *Eternal India,* that

India which has something precious to give to the world and to her own children. This is Swami Vivekananda's gift to the Indian people, a clear concept of India's external relations. We do not interfere with the politics of any nation abroad. When China became free and politically strong, she started interfering politically in the affairs of other nations. England did so earlier. America did so, and is still doing so. So also U.S.S.R. That is their national individuality. India does not, and cannot, do this, because her national individuality lies in another field. We have no *political* message to the rest of the world. In that field we are at the receiving end. *It is time we grasp this arresting truth glaring at our face*. Then we shall seek and find our national individuality and what it means to the world. When Alexander the Great came to India, he became fascinated with India's philosophy. More than one Greek historian refers to this fact. So it has been with others from other nations in history. And so it is even today.

Addresing American university audiences, I had often said that their country was discovered as India by Columbus. Even after the mistake was recognized, the native people of America continued, and still continue, to be called Indians. I asked the American students to *continue* the exploratory voyage of Columbus and discover the real India for themselves. I referred to the poem, *Passage to India*, written by one of their great poets, Walt Whitman. 'India is a vast continent, geographically as much as ideologically. There is a whole continent of thought in India which it is up to you to explore; and Swami Vivekananda came to you to give you a taste of the excitement in store for you from that exploration', I told them.

And today, America and other parts of the world have set their course on this momentous voyage of exploration.

*Modern India versus Singapore*

*Question:* Do you think that Singapore has a propitious atmosphere for cultivating dialogue between religions? How can that atmosphere be made more fitting for the Ramakrishna Mission's work?

*Answer:* The Ramakrishna Mission in Singapore is a very dynamic centre which has made an impact upon the life, not only of Singapore, but also of the South-East Asian region as a whole. Fortunately, the Singapore political set-up, as it is constituted today, has a broad philosophy making for harmony between the races, the languages, and the religions of the Singapore people. There is a general desire among its diverse peoples to come close to each other; and the centre of the Mission in Singapore is really active in this particular field. I was very happy to find that the centre and the Swami-in-charge, Siddhatmanandaji, are highly respected by the various segments of the Singapore population. This is what you call a good augury for the future. They realize that this Mission has a special function to perform in the community life of Singapore.

The whole of South-East Asia has become a field for this spread of unifying man-making ideas. Singapore is just the service base for spiritual and cultural services in that region. On both levels, work is being done. Recently a new building costing over Rs. 3,50,000 has been put up. That building is specially devoted to seminars and discussions of this kind and to various retreats and so on. It has just started in a big way this year. Its activities will increase as time goes on.

*Modern India versus Burma*

*Question:* What about our shrouded neighbour, Burma? How is the Mission working there?

*Answer:* Burma has become an isolationist today. It just covers itself up. It does not want contacts with the external world. It thinks that these contacts will harm Burma's way to political and social maturity. But, generally, this is not true. When you shut yourself up in your own little room, what happens is that the air of the room does not go out and the outside air does not come in; and so the air in the room stagnates. That is what we in India did for a thousand years and we paid a heavy price. Ultimately, it is going to be injurious to the State that adopts such a policy.

I do hope that Burma will become liberal in its attitude to modern culture and modern civilization, and that it will allow modern ideas to contribute to a solution of its problems in the contemporary way and not in an old-fashioned isolationist way. Burma is a very beautiful country. I lived there for three years during the pre-War period, and what beautiful relationships we had with the people there! The present attitude is just a passing phase; that is what I hope.

### *Modern India versus Ceylon*

*Question:* Swami Vivekananda referred to Buddhism as the logical fulfilment of Hinduism. From that standpoint, cannot our Mission's work in Ceylon, with the collaboration of the Sinhalese Buddhists, be of special service to the Buddhist world?

*Answer:* We have a strong Ramakrishna Mission movement in Ceylon and the thinking Buddhists respond to it with enthusiasm. They come to its functions, speak at its meetings, and feel happy to be associated with the work of the Ramakrishna Mission. It conducts a big guest-house at Kataragama, an international pilgrim-centre, where Bud-

dhists and people of various other persuasions come and stay, and the Mission serves all without distinction. It feeds them all free, and they give donations. It is a wonderful work that is being done there. Christians, Muslims, Hindus —all go there, besides the Buddhists. The Buddhists of Ceylon have yet to develop the desire to go out of themselves and enter into dialogue with other religions. Generally, there is that reserve among them. But among the thinking section, this new idea that they must not be shut up in a particular group if they want to develop, is coming up.

One difficulty in Ceylon is the internal conflict between the Tamilian population in the north and the Sinhalese majority in the rest of the island. The Sinhalese have a very uneasy relationship with the Tamil people. But they are not usually allergic to non-Tamil Indians. They are aware of their own kinship with North India. After all, they are originally from Bengal. The first man who went and colonized Ceylon about 2500 years ago was from Bengal. They do realize that. And Buddhism also went there first from Bengal, as also from Tamilnad and other parts of India later. But the present friction is due to historical circumstances. The Tamilians conquered Ceylon for some centuries and the Sinhalese fear is that they may again conquer them. That fear is slowly going, very slowly. I saw many Sinhalese and Tamilians working together.

It is harmful even in a big country, and more so in a small country, to have such jealousies and conflicts among its own people. But they in Ceylon do not seem to realize the truth of it yet. But the Mission's contribution here is going to be vital because we respect the country. We respect the Buddhist tradition that is there, and we respect the Hindu tradition also. We represent the synthesis of both

these traditions. That is the Mission's position. In fact, on a previous occasion when I spoke there, I gave a series of lectures on Buddhism in the modern world and on Sri Ramakrishna's contribution. That was during the island's celebration of the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's passing away.

### *Modern India versus Australia*

*Question:* What was your experience in Australia as to the possibilities of Vedānta being helpful to the people of that country?

*Answer:* Australia is exactly in the position of the U.S.A. There is a hunger there for things that lie above man's worldly life — a spiritual hunger. Economic prosperity is very high. The population is very small. A huge continent — with about twelve million people only in a continent which is bigger than India! That is Australia. But recently there is evidence of a hunger for religion. The desire to turn to India spiritually is strengthened by another desire to turn to India politically as well. This is because the British withdrawal from the East, especially from Singapore, leaves Australia isolated. She wants to forge new links, strong links, political and social, with Eastern countries like India and Indonesia. So there is a considerable turning towards India; and India's turning towards Austrialia is also there. She is a very well developed country, industrially.

During my one week's visit to Australia in October-November 1969, I visited Sydney, Melbourne, and Canberra, the three important cities. I came across many people who were eager to understand the philosophy of India. Indian books are in big demand in Australia today. Many Indian religious teachers go there, some good, some not so

good, some positively bad. All sorts of people go. And they find their own listeners too.

But serious students, asking for serious ideas, philosophical and religious, are not many. That is why the Vedānta movement cannot immediately spread there. When they realize that they need something pure, then Vedānta will spread. There are very few today who understand that. But that number is going to increase; I could notice the emergence of this tendency there.

### *Vedānta and the Modern World*

*Question:* Looking back on your tour, do you think that Vedānta can be the chief unifying factor in bringing together all creative forces that are at work in the world?

*Answer:* Yes; but it will take a long time. We know that Vedānta has that strength, philosophical and spiritual. It is essentially a comprehensive philosophy of man in all his heights and depths. It does not make a distinction between man physical and man intellectual, man spiritual and man secular, between sacred and profane, between scientific and religious: none of these. But that type of Vedānta has to be projected, and it must reach wide sections of thinking people. That will take quite a bit of time. But, if there is any philosophy that can unify the creative forces that are at work in the modern world, it is Vedānta. No other system of thought has that grip on life as a whole. It is the only thought which science respects today.

### *India as Viewed from Abroad*

*Question:* How did India, with all her problems and struggles, appear to you from abroad, when looked at in the perspective of the entire human race moving towards an unknown destiny?

*Answer:* The first impression that you get of India's mounting problems, viewed from foreign countries, especially the highly advanced countries of the West, is that human problems are universal. Every country has its own problems; accordingly, we have our own problems in India. This means that one's sense of despair, that India is absolutely down and out, is immediately lifted. Everywhere, human societies are facing problems today and, in some countries, these problems are more complicated than they are in India. This gives one a sense of perspective, which is necessary when viewing one's own problems. It does not lessen the seriousness of one's problems, but it gives one courage to face them and tackle them. Everywhere there are problems and every country is trying to face them manfully. We shall also do the same. It is this type of courage, it is this type of hope, that inspires an Indian when he views his country's problems from afar. I often used to realize from afar the truth of Swami Vivekananda's faith in India's destiny and in her capacity to face and solve her problems in the modern age.

But there are problems which accumulate during centuries of stagnation of a society. And so far as our country is concerned, we have today these cumulative problems to tackle. We have to summon up our enormous human resources and face them. There is a courageous way of facing problems. That was what Swami Vivekananda taught us. In the West, they are courageously facing their problems; and so, any sense of despair that we in India may have experienced in recent years is absolutely unfounded. If there are problems, man is more than adequate to solve them. To prepare men and women in India for this task was the mission of Swami Vivekananda; and his indomitable spirit will inspire India to identify and solve her mounting problems.

In the West there are very serious problems, especially in a country like the U.S.A. or countries like England, France, even Germany. The same thing I saw in Japan. Tremendous problems are there facing the people in all these countries. Some of them are just problems of the post-War era, as in Germany, England, and Japan. Their world had been shattered by the War, and not just their economies and political structures. A new world has emerged, but they are trying to find their own place, their own mission, in that post-War world. They are trying to find the resources of wisdom and strength and confidence to face these problems. To some extent, they are winning. But we can see that they have still mounting problems to face in the social field, and even in the political and the international fields.

America has tremendous domestic problems; and international problems as well. In fact, when you compare the problems various nations have to face in the post-War world, I discovered, during the period of my stay in U.S.A., that that great country was confronted with the fact that, internationally, her image had gone down during the post-War years. This is a fact which is being recognized in the U.S. itself. At the end of the Second World War, America enjoyed the highest prestige in the world. All the nations looked up to it for guidance and inspiration. It was the great bastion of liberty against Nazi and other totalitarian tyrannies. It had enormous resources arising from the most efficient modern technology and vast material wealth.

But during these last twenty-two years, there has been a continual erosion of this dominant position of respect and prestige of the United States in world affairs. She has received rebuffs from every part of the world. Any small nation can just snap her fingers at the still powerful United

States of America; and this not only by South American countries, but also by Far-Eastern countries. America is having a reappraisal of her foreign policy and of her relations with foreign nations. And, then, there are social problems within America itself: the conflicts between blacks and whites, between the youths and the older generation, and between the entrenched capitalistic system and the new social forces generated within by post-War international influences.

All these put together make for a mounting set of problems for the United States, which its citizens are struggling hard to tackle. It is instructive for us to watch and see how they do it, and see what lessons we can learn from it for facing our own problems in India. We do hope that these nations will succeed in facing their problems and evolve for themselves more stable and progressive societies. And we hope the same for India also. In these times, no nation need depend upon its own limited resources. There is the entire human resource of wisdom and experience to help nations. India was taught this lesson by Swami Vivekananda. So, viewing Indian problems from the vantage ground of a foreign country, a sensitive Indian citizen can feel hope for his nation.

But whatever be the nature of the problems, however mounting and complex they be, human resources can be mobilized against them and they can be overcome. That is the feeling that I have: a sense of hope, a sense of confidence. There is nothing that man cannot do. There is infinite possibility within man. That is the Vedāntic spiritual approach represented by Swami Vivekananda. That is the essential spirit behind modern thought as well. The Promethean spark, when it is ignited in a human being or in a group of people, will be able to burn up these problems. And I feel that, through all the contemporary struggles and

tumults, humanity is marching forward to achieve better and higher levels of life for man everywhere.

When I was in foreign countries, I often used to be impressed by the very size of India, continental and demographic: every sixth person in the world is an Indian. It is a vast country endowed with tremendous human and natural resources, but also faced with mounting problems. Put all these together, side by side with the energy of the Indian national, philosophical and spiritual heritage and of modern knowledge and technique, and we have the India of today. She is assimilating all these energy resources today. That is what makes me detect a new strength in India, and experience a sense of confidence in our people, and in our leaders. I have never felt a sense of defeatism or hopelessness in this matter.

*The Problem of the Underprivileged: U S.A. versus India*

*Question:* Where are the marked affinities and differences in the modes of struggle of the underprivileged people of other countries, such as the Negroes in U.S.A. and the underprivileged in India such as the Harijans?

*Answer*: The situation is practically the same. After all, the underprivileged in India and the underprivileged in the U.S.—both constitute vast masses of people who have suffered heavily for long from the existing social order in the two countries. If a Negro has suffered oppression, enslavement, and even physical torture, our own lower classes in India have suffered no less. But in the way these problems come to the surface, in the way they have been tackled by the nation as a whole, or by its underprivileged section, there is a world of difference between the U.S. and India.

One great difference is that in India the people are one. You cannot deny it. The lower classes or the underprivileged, and those who are at the top, they come from the same stock and are largely indistinguishable. In America, on the other hand, there is a glaring contrast between the underprivileged and the privileged, because of the glaring difference in racial stock and colour. It is not an easy thing to unite the white and the black, because the contrast is so obvious. Whereas, in India, this gulf does not exist. We only have to change our attitude and realize that the underprivileged are our own people kept down by social discrimination and economic domination. We have only to extend to them economic and educational opportunities, side by side with educating our privileged in ethical sense and political wisdom. That makes matters simpler.

That is why, in India, the situation did not develop into a harsh militant confrontation between the underprivileged and the privileged, There are two facets to this: The first is the teachings of the great spiritual teachers and socio-political leaders of the last and this century, who were the pioneers of India's modern renaissance. They admitted the weaknesses of Indian society, its tyranny, oppression, and injustice, and called upon the upper classes to make amends for it, to go down and bring up their underprivileged fellowmen. In powerful accents, Swami Vivekananda, for example, exhorted the Indian people to 'wipe off this blot' from their society. So did Gandhiji.

Speaking in Lahore, now in West Pakistan, in 1897, on *Vedānta,* Swami Vivekananda said (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. III, pp. 430-31):

'Therefore, young men of Lahore, raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita (philosphy of non-separateness), for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love until you see that the same

Lord is present everywhere. Unfurl that banner of love! "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!" Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help others, your little self must go. ... The nation is sinking; the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads — those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past; the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all strength; the unnumbered millions for whom we have invented the doctrine of *Lokācāra* (usage), to whom we have talked theoretically that we are all the same and all are one with the same Lord, without even an ounce of practice! ... *Wipe off this blot.* ... Our insincerity in India is awful. What we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death.'

Such was the profound effect of this approach upon the educated, upon the intelligentsia, of the time, that a movement among the upper classes to go down to the lower classes and bring them up took place in India; behind this was genuine sympathy for, and real understanding of, the social situation. It was not widespread enough, but it was significant enough to constitute a powerful movement for equality and equal opportunity set going by the upper classes themselves. This attitude and movement was nourished and sustained by the powerful influences proceeding from Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi.

The second is this: There arose great leaders among the underprivileged themselves, Sri Narayana Guru of Kerala, for instance, who initiated powerful spiritual movements, farsighted and creative, to raise the social and economic level of their underprivileged fellowmen, who were already rich in a spiritual sense; for, though poor, they were not criminals, but cultured human beings.

In the case of the U.S., the founding fathers had not recognized this problem when independence came to Ame-

rica in 1776. But, within less than a century, the problem became very acute, leading to the Civil War. There were great leaders who recognized that a great evil had been perpetrated on the underprivileged, especially the Negroes, and they tried to make amends. America remained united as one nation in spite of the threat of secession from its southern confederacy. The fiercely-fought long Civil War was entirely devoted to this question of human equality which is the basis of the American Constitution. In that Civil War, this great subject was the issue which developed into a tremendous conflict between one group and the other, the progressive and the reactionary. But the underprivileged were represented in this struggle not by the underprivileged themselves, namely, the Negroes, who were largely passive witnesses of this struggle for human rights on their behalf, but by the progressive liberal people among the whites themselves against their own reactionary fellow-whites.

That was the great idealism behind the Civil War. But it was a misfortune that, after the successful completion of the Civil War, the American nation forgot this problem. For decades, the fate of the Negro was nobody's concern, and it was this that cumulatively created a tense situation during the eight decades following the end of the Civil War.

### *Black Militancy in Post-War U.S.A.*

The Second World War generated great hopes among all the underprivileged of the world for a new era of economic and cultural opportunity for themselves; and the Negroes in America were no exception; they looked forward to the dawn of freedom and equality. A tremendous movement for extending political and social rights and privileges to the Negroes became the order of the day. After the conclusion of the Second World War, there has been

the civil rights movement in the U.S.A., in which both the blacks and the whites have been participating and it has thrown up powerful leaders. From 1950 onwards, the pace of extending civil rights to the Negroes has been accelerated by several federal enactments which, when challenged by white-dominated southern states, have been upheld by progressive Supreme Court judgments.

These things in America are indications of a consciousness among the privileged people, the cultured progressive sections among them, that the struggle to bring about a truly egalitarian society in the U.S., in line with the declaration in its own Constitution, and also the U.N. declaration on human rights, can and should no longer be delayed. But the movement itself was very slow, and there was strong resistance from various segments of the whites or the privileged section of the population. It was this lag between mounting aspirations and slow implementations, in the post-War context of irrepressible human hopes, that made for the movement of the underprivileged developing a militant character. One of the more important features of the post-War U.S. society is the militancy of its black population.

This black militancy has really become a serious problem to the U.S. today. It affects even the civil rights movement. We don't want civil rights, the black militants say; we want to remain separate from the whites. In fact, there is a real separation movement among the blacks there: 'we don't want to be part of a white society at all, equal or unequal; we shall be entirely independent; we shall have nothing to do with the whites.'

That is one aspect of the black movement. We cannot but be deeply impressed by the energy, dynamism, fearlessness, and self-dedication evident in the black-militant move-

ment in the U.S. It is posing a serious problem to the wisdom of the American people: how to destroy this virus of militancy with its hatred, and bring about real equality and integration of the American people? America is passing through that phase just now; and I could see several aspects of it during the fifteen months I was there.

One of the great black militant leaders, as I have pointed out previously, was Malcolm X. He was extremely militant and hateful of the whites in the beginning; but, towards the end, he mellowed. In the beginning, he said that blacks and whites could never live together. At that time he said, every white man is a wicked rogue; he cannot be trusted. Towards the end, he slightly mellowed: he admitted that there were some good people among the whites. That was considerable change in Malcolm X, whose autobiography is a widely read book; it is a masterly book. Even as literature, it is a remarkable book. It deserved a Nobel Prize for literature, mirroring the sufferings, aspirations, and struggles of millions.

In that book we can sense, we can feel, the anger, the hatred, the shame, of a whole 20 million black peoples exploding into a book, the tremendous explosion of a whole race which has been subjected to insult and tyranny for centuries by the white man. All these found a focal point of explosion in Malcolm X and in every page of his autobiography. The introduction to the book, written by a distinguished white intellectual, says that many whites find themselves unable to read the book without fear and a sense of guilt coming over them. They cannot stand it because most of what he says in the book is true, too true. Some of the pages, as I have said previously, are very revealing of the black mind.

Says one passage which I had referred to once before:

The whites came from England and landed at Plymouth Rock. (Plymouth Rock, on the east coast, near Boston, is the place where the English first came and settled). So he puts it: you came and landed at Plymouth Rock; but we were brought as slaves from Africa; and *Plymouth Rock landed on our heads*! That is how he puts it. Such language is plentiful in the book. The truth is told with such bluntness, with such passion, that it creates acute fear in the whites who read the book.

It is difficult to predict when this racial problem in the U.S.A. will be solved. I should say that a solution would come through both sides working together—the whites going down to bring up the blacks and the blacks slowly beginning to think that there may be good whites, that all whites are not that bad. This is revealed, positively, from the black side, in the evolution of the personality and ideas of a leader like Malcolm X. If this noble attitude goes on growing, eventually there is bound to be an integrated American society. But, because of a real gulf between the white and the black even physically, and because there is no spiritual wisdom, beyond the political and social, available to the nation, the problem of the underprivileged becomes much more intractable for America.

### *The Vedāntic Vision of Equality:*<br>*The Innate Divinity of All Men*

It is here that India has certain advantages. The first advantage is the one I referred to earlier, that the underprivileged and the privileged belong to the same human stock. Neither colour nor any racial factor is present to complicate the social situation. Secondly, and what is most significant, we have the guidance of a rational philosophy, Vẹdānta, which goes beyond the political, beyond the ṣocial,

with respect to man and all inter-human relationships, and which does not look at man merely from the outside. It looks at man from the inside also and teaches the spiritual truth of the essential divinity of man, *of all men*.

This is a teaching that cuts across all external evaluations of man such as black or white, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, and the social distinctions proceeding from them. It alone can really help to establish an integrated social order, whether in India, America, or elsewhere. And this teaching is very ancient in India. *Yet we have to confess that, in India itself, it has been more honoured in the breach than in the observance.* But that teaching has found a tremendous expression in modern India through her great spiritual teachers like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In the political field, great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi also implemented it. Not only is there in modern India a great vision of human equality, beyond the physical, beyond the political, beyond the social, a truly spiritual vision of man and his excellence, but there is also the inspiration of great teachers, and the powerful movements emanating from them, which guarantee the implementation of the vision through persistent social education and legislative action.

So India has a great spiritual resource, generated in the distant past as well as in the recent present, for tackling this problem of the underprivileged. And the Indian Constitution is definitely on the side of the underprivileged. It has banned all types of special privileges, all kinds of exclusiveness such as caste and untouchability. Along with such provisions in the Constitution and the strenuous endeavours of the Indian political state, there is also the awakened social conscience, produced by the dynamic and rational spiritual message of practical Vedānta, to sustain

all such progressive endeavours. The State has banned untouchability. It may still be prevalent here and there, but its back is broken by social education and legislative action. Its elimination from Indian society is only a question of time. Common democratic education, common social life, common political processes—when a generation or two of our people will pass through this common experience, these barriers will quietly become things of the past. That is why there is rational basis for greater hope of overcoming these social distinctions in India than in some of the Western countries.

*The Post-War Cultural Emergence of Black America*

*Question*: What happened to the good work of Martin Luther King for the Negroes? Has it been overtaken by black militancy? And what is the prospect of bringing this struggle to a happy end?

*Answer*: All extremism in the social field is the result of the slowness in the implementation of justice in society. If this implementation is sufficiently quick, there is no extremism at all. Negro or Black militancy is a product of the extreme slowness of the emancipation of the Negro. An emancipation proclamation in the 1860's is one thing, but the actual situation of the Negro, due to the continued neglect of the implementation of the proclamation, is quite a different thing. Even up to thirty years ago, American Negroes used to be lynched by white Americans in the streets. Today there is no such lynching. At least, it has ceased to be a one-way affair. If there is lynching, it is both ways. The Negro has become very assertive and he counter-attacks.

One of the things I saw in the U.S. was really striking — a frightened black community, which could be, and has been, oppressed and humiliated by the whites, has become so strong, so self-confident, that it has become now a source

of fear to the white majority community itself. That is something amazing. If, in a town, there are only, say, five per cent of Negroes, they can create enough trouble and disturb the whole town. They do not know fear, they do not care for their lives. Such tremendous energy, such fearlessness, such militancy, and such reversal of roles, is rare in history. I have not seen it in any other part of the world. Having been a helpless creature for centuries, the American Negro today is alive, vital, confident, with faith in himself. That is the heartening aspect of it from the Vedāntic point of view as presented by Swami Vivekananda.

This is a wonderful lesson. For the first time, as Vedānta sees it, his Ātman, his Self, is awake in the Negro; and the first expression of such awakening is faith in oneself and the courage to assert one's rights: 'I cannot be treated as a *creature*. I demand being treated as a *person*. I will assert my right to be so treated. I will stand on my own feet and shape my life and destiny.' This strength, this *śraddhā*—*ātma-śraddhā*, or faith in onself—has come to the blacks in a big way; that is how Vedānta looks at it.

There are many American thinkers today who echo this Vedāntic view in their looking at this militant Negro movement as an essential pre-requisite for an integrated American society. Why? Because you cannot integrate a free and strong community with a slavish and weak community; you can only integrate two free and strong communities. But the Negro was never free; he was always a slave; he was always looked down upon; and he was always weak and had no faith in himself. But today, for the first time, the American Negroes have shed all weakness and fear and are struggling for the recognition of their own identity as a free people. But they do not beg for it. They assert themselves. They are going to force this recognition on the world.

This is the meaning of the contemporary Negro militancy in the U.S.A.

In American universities and colleges, in 1950's and 60's, the Negroes started militant movements for this one thing: Identity, Recognition. Recognize Negro history: recognize Negro institutions; recognize Negro culture; have chairs for Negro culture, for Negro history. In the beginning, the university authorities protested: 'This is foolish. There is no such thing as Negro history or Negro culture.'

But, within five years, almost all the colleges and universities, especially in the progressive areas, recognized the validity of the Negro demand, and agreed that there is such a thing as Negro culture, there is such a thing as Negro history. In fact, today, there is a vast movement for unearthing the past of the Negroes in the African countries, from where they were brought as slaves to U.S.A. and other Western hemisphere countries by the European colonies to work in their plantations, after the discovery of the western hemisphere in 1492. The study revealed that they had developed cultures and fine institutions of their own: all that was lying in the limbo of oblivion. Today, research is being conducted into all these, as also into Negro music, Negro art. On these subjects, big volumes are coming out in a steady stream. Valuable books on Negro history and culture are coming out from the devoted work of research students and scholars, both whites and blacks. Several universities have established departments for Negro history and culture.

One more point the Negroes stress. They do not want white men to head these departments. They want Negroes to be heads of these departments. The universities often oppose this demand. But the Negro students start a struggle, they strike, and finally they get what they want. In this way, Black militancy is creating a condition for the recog-

nition of the cultural integrity and identity of the blacks. This affords a real possibility of integration of the whites with the blacks. This is because, as I said before, integration can only be on the basis of free peoples coming together to live and work together for a common destiny; it can never come so long as there is a strong white race dominating a weak black race. So there are thinkers in the U. S. who welcome this movement of the black for self-identity, whether that movement is the peaceful civil rights movement or the militant black power movement.

Negroes have held a high place in non-classical music throughout American history. All over the U.S., if you switch on the TV, you will often see well-known Negro singers, more often women, coming on the screen. They have a fine musical voice; they have a talent for this art.

In sports also, the Negroes are on the top. They have fine bodies; they are a picture of physical vitality. In long jump and high jump, running and wrestling, they excel. They easily come to the top in these field sports and games. In football also, one can see plenty of Negroes as successful players.

The Negroes are coming up in business, in co-operative ventures and, in a small way, in industry also. There are also, as I have already said, many intellectuals and writers among them.

### *Current Controversy in U.S.A.: Nature versus Nurture*

But there are some whites who protest against all this. Last year, Dr. Arthur R. Jensen, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, started a controversy, apparently speaking the language of science, but, below it, one could detect the racial bias which dominated anthropology and ethnology in the last century. He

propounded a thesis in an article which, in effect, meant that intelligence is genetically determined and fixed, and that cultural factors and influences have no power to increase or decrease it. Whatever you may do to the children of the backward in society, they will remain essentially below standard, because genetically they are inferior. Jensen insisted that, in terms of the average Intelligence Quotient, whites are more intelligent than blacks. He ascribed the failure of the compensatory education measures of the U.S. government to this basic genetic factor.

Jensen thus resurrected an old controversy of the last century's biology: which is superior, nature or nurture? As soon as Jensen's article appeared in the 1969 winter issue of the *Harvard Educational Review*, several protest articles appeared, both in the spring 1969 issue of the same journal, and in the *Time* and other journals.

The long, critical, protest article by Gilbert Voyat in the *Time* magazine for 17 May 1969 opens with a note of scientific surprise:

> 'Who would have believed in the declining decades of the twentieth century the antique psychological argument between environment and heredity would garner headlines and rub academic tempers raw? The older progressive educators scolded each other about the primacy of nurture over nature. The practising pragmatist insisted that "you are what you grow up as, not merely what you are born with." The environmentalists declared that slums produce children with more limited intelligence than generous suburbs do. Not so, asserted the genetically persuaded: poor performance in intellectual matters is the result of a shallow gene-pool.
>
> 'And so the argument continues. In this past winter's issue of the *Harvard Educational Review*, Dr. Arthur, R. Jensen, professor of educational psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, suggests that intelligence is a trait not unlike eye colour and hardly more susceptible to change. This study presents an interesting renewal of the genetic argument. Although many of the ideas defend-

ed have the aura of statistical scientific work, they are neither new, self-evident, nor irrefutable. The fact that Dr. Jensen's findings are corroborated by statistical evidence does not make them true. It makes them misleading.'

Several scientists expressed the fear that Jensen's thesis smelt racial bias and a tendency to go back to the nineteenth-century race-superiority theory, which subsequent developments in biology had repudiated. The UNESCO had sponsored a conference of scientists from seventeen countries in Moscow in 1964, which, after a study of the biological aspects of race, had issued an unanimous thirteen-point declaration, of which points 1, 2 and 13 categorically asserted that there was no scientific basis for the belief in the superiority of one race over another (*The Unesco Courier*, April 1965). Every race, when given the cultural opportunity, could manifest the highest intelligence traits.

This was the scientific conclusion. And Dr. Jensen was now opposing this on the basis of his own new studies and findings, and statistics. But his critics showed the weakness of his position; statistics can be made to support any conclusion, especially in the social sciences. If you want to prove a point, you can cite statistics in support; if you want to disprove the point, the same statistics can be suitably manipulated. Thus, on this matter of racial differences, a lot of controversy has been going on in the U.S. It is just a reaction of some of the whites against the coming up of the blacks, and they do it under the pretext of science!

I personally feel that the separatist movement among the Negroes will gradually be eroded by this militant movement's success in developing the personality of the Negro peoples, side by side with the whites also realizing that such a developed personality of the Negro community is necessary for an integrated and free American society, and that

it cannot be achieved by merely extending to the Negroes social amenities like schools and amusement parks, etc. I watched these trends with much interest. And I have the feeling that, by the end of this century, this problem will have been solved in a tolerably satisfactory manner.

*Impact of Negro Awakening on Christianity*

Martin Luther King, as you know, was the leader of the civil rights movement. This movement and its members are guided by Christian liberalism and modern humanism. They also do, of course, recognize the tremendous injustice suffered by the Negro at the hands of the white man. But they also realize that there is no use in raking up old history. Their attitude is: let us look forward; the whites are realizing their mistakes and want to correct them; let us join hands with the liberal forces of the white people and thus create an egalitarian American society.

They take inspiration also from the Christian religious ideal which makes no distinction between white and black, although, in actual practice, Western Christianity did make distinctions between the whites and the blacks. Indeed, one of the protests against Christianity by the militant blacks in Africa and America today is that Christianity has painted the devil black. Sometimes, in a city, some Negroes will enter a church at night and paint Jesus and Mary black. Next day, when white worshippers go for Service, they find that their God has become black!

Christianity has slightly fallen into disfavour in African countries today because of its racialist attitudes and practices, and because also of its painting its God and His Son as white and its devil as black. So there is a reaction against this among the blacks. Some of the blacks are writing books on Christian history to show that Jesus was not white but black, or at least more black than white. They

have their own theory: the Jewish race in ancient times was not so white as it became later on when it was dispersed in European countries. All sorts of theories on these and other themes are being advanced. All sorts of books on these subjects are also being published.

The civil rights movement, unlike the black militant movement, is the product of modern liberalism. But liberalism is an attempt to unite two extremes, in this case, the white extreme and the black extreme. Between two extremes, liberalism is always crushed. One of the more important aspects of modern political history is the eclipse of liberalism. Liberalism has no place in a world surcharged with political and social emotions and passions as, earlier, it had no place in the world of religion similarly charged with emotions and passions. So American socio-political liberalism is getting eclipsed today. The whites and the blacks are both attacking the liberal attitude and policy. There are extremists among the whites also. In America, the white anti-Negro Ku-Klux-Klan was a well-known movement. It is there even today, though it has not been functioning so effectively in recent times.

### *Impact of Gandhiji on American Protest Movements*

The wife of Martin Luther King is now the leader of the civil rights movement, along with the (black) Reverend Abernathy. They organize civil rights protest marches, etc., like their recently organized impressive march to Washington. They and their methods are pooh-poohed by the black extremists; and they are pooh-poohed by the white extremists also. But, by and large, the average American citizen is on the side of the civil rights movement. Gandhiji's influence is profound in this civil rights movement. In fact,

Martin Luther King derived his inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi.

A non-violent protest aims to evoke good sentiments in the opponent. This is Gandhiji's method; and this has done great good to contemporary American society. This method, I found, was tried recently, and successfully too, in southern California also, in its large grape-growing region. There was a non-cooperation or satyagraha movement by the grape-pickers against the exploitation by the grape-growers. They conducted the movement purely on Gandhian lines and the leader of the movement, Cesar Chavez , had a photo of Gandhiji hanging from the wall behind him in his office. They sought inspiration from Gandhiji and his methods in their movement, which found a satisfactory conclusion later, after bitter months of frustrating struggle followed by negotiation.

The only *political* influence going from India to other countries, we find, is the strangely *non-political* and truly religious, non-violent techniques of Gandhiji. His influence helps to make movements of political and social protest in foreign countries non-violent, constructive, and free from mutual hatred. This is particularly evident in the civil rights movement and the grape-pickers' movement.

*Questions:* You mentioned the Negro people's wanting to own Christ by painting him black. Do you think that their movement for advancement is guided more by Christian principles than by Marxist thought?

*Answer:* The Negro movement has very little of Marxist thought inspiring it; but some of the white groups seeking social justice for the blacks have Marxist source of inspiration. The blacks take modern humanistic ideas, liberal ideas, or Christian ideas, or, if extremist, they just adopt militant ideas and methods, without affiliation with Marxism

or any other system. And the Marxist movement as such has not anything to do with the civil rights movement or any other movement of the blacks for civil justice. There is a small Marxist movement in the U.S.; but it is not very effective. The labour movement in America, as I have already said, is essentially a trade union movement, not a political movement.

### *Impact of Negro Awakening on the American Demographic Situation*

About the black situation in the U.S., there is one more interesting point. In several cities in the U.S., the majority of the population is black. The migration of the blacks to the cities started immediately after the Civil War of the last century; the pace became faster after the thirties of this century; but it has become a prominent demographic feature of America since the end of the Second World War. Parallel to the migration of the blacks to the cities, there is a migration of the whites from the cities to their suburbs. The suburbs are becoming white, the heartland of the cities is becoming black. Many cities have black mayors now.

Due to the black militancy, due to the general sense of insecurity, and due to the increase of crime in the U.S.A., you will find many whites in some of the big cities not inclined to go out after sunset, especially the women. That is something very disturbing in the social situation. In a book recently published in the U.S.A. and reviewed in its journals, the author states that, formerly, criminals were behind walls and free men moved about freely in the city, but that, now, criminals move about freely in the city and free men have to be behind walls at home! The social situation manufactures criminals, and often protects them against apprehension by law.

This is another serious problem for the American society to face and to tackle. It is a problem baffling even the leading thinkers. Society follows the usual methods: it resorts to increasing the police force; it votes for more punitive measures. The citizen, on his part, resorts to self-help also, through adoption of protective measures; houses instal alarm bells and various other warning devices of high efficiency; but the criminals still gain access to homes by adopting more efficient methods. There is, as it were, a continuous chain reaction going on, criminal offensive measures chasing continually the State's and the citizen's defensive measures, and *vice versa*.

All I can say, from whatever wisdom India has garnered on this subject, is that, unless social forces get some sort of a spiritual direction, it will be difficult to reverse the trend towards crime. Even in a society moved by spiritual ideals, there will be crime; but it will be peripheral; and devotion to the spiritual ideal on the part of society will help to keep it to the peripheral. But if the philosophy by which a civilization lives has no place in it for the spiritual dimension of the human personality above his physical and organic dimension, but upholds only man as confined to that organic dimension, then man becomes wise in entirely devoting himself to organic satisfactions. He must have them, whatever be the means and the method; and if he persists in it, he is perfectly right; because that is the philosophy of man presented to him by his civilization. And the cynic is there to advise him that there is an unrecorded *eleventh commandment* which tells man that, even if he were to break all the ten commandments, he should see that he is not caught by the law!

This is why Swami Vivekananda said, at the end of the last century, that unless modern civilization shifts its ground

and succeeds in basing itself on spiritual foundations, and learns to view man in a spiritual light, it will be continuing to sit on a volcano which may erupt in small ways to begin with, but which will burst eventually in a big way. Such eruption need not be only in wars; it may burst out in the form of social unrest, juvenile delinquency, crime, sex, violence, alcoholism, drug, and other explosions. All these are happening in many of the advanced societies, in spite of vast knowledge, wealth, and power. And they will not leave untouched the developing nations either, as they develop steadily their industry and economy. Because, the prevailing philosophy of man behind Western civilization will increasingly influence these nations as well.

The only antidote to these evils is religion—rational, practical, and universal—deriving sanction, not from a creed or a dogma, *but from the shining spiritual nature of man,* his innate divinity, and from the technique of his growth in his spiritual dimension—a technique which alone has the vision and the power to discipline man's organic cravings, *and transform man the brute into man the god.* This is the testament of Vedānta, a testament originally given expression to, over three thousand years ago, by the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (vi. 20):

'Even if men shall succeed, through their technical efficiency, to roll up the whole of space like a piece of leather, still will they never experience the end of misery without realizing the luminous Self within.'

India has many things to learn from the experiences of the Western peoples, and from the way they are tackling, or failing to catch up with, their problems.

## *CONCLUSION*

*Thanks on behalf of the Brothers:* At the close of this

very stimulating dialogue, we are happy to convey to you, Swami Ranganathananda, our hearty thanks. In the course of this dialogue, we have mentally covered a good part of the world, which you had travelled through, during your long tour. And through your well-informed, refreshing, and thought-provoking answers to our questions, we have gained some helpful insight into the strivings and aspirations of many a people in the world and, what is more, of the relevancy and urgency of the essential mission of Vedānta in the affairs of the entire mankind. Man must encounter himself, manifest his divine potential in all its dimensions — that seems to be the central answer to most of the baffling situations in which man, individual and collective, finds himself.

As a traveller looking at the world with the eye of a Vedāntin, *and in the spirit more of a pilgrim than of a mere visitor,* and mixing with the various cross-sections of the people, particularly the students, of various countries, and preaching to them the rational, universal, and strength-giving message of Vedānta in the light of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and returning home rich with the affection, love, and kindness received everywhere — you have placed before us a world-perspective which is positively reassuring and for which we offer you our thanks.

## Part Two

*Introduction*: At the close of the narration of his second American tour of August-January, 1971-72, in his book, *A Pilgrim looks at the World,* Vol. II, Swami Ranganathananda sums up his impressions in the following brief Note: *Farewell to U.S.A.* on the eve of his leaving Boston on 13 January 1972 for Europe *en route* to India.—*Publishers*

Today is my last day in U.S.A. during this current tour. I complete today my main tour. The visit to six European countries during the next three weeks does not form the scheduled part of this lecture tour, but is only a diversion *en route* to India.

### *'Wheres do we go from here?'*

During the past seven months, I have been living in an atmosphere of alert and vibrant humanity in Australia, Fiji, U.S.A., Holland, Canada, and Mexico. I found everywhere, especially in the highly developed countries of U.S.A. and Holland, and to a lesser extent in Australia and Canada, the heart of man, and to a lesser extent, his mind, and to a still lesser extent his uttered speech also, asking the one question, sitting on the peak of his material achievements: *Where do we go from here?*

And in various lectures and parlour talks, this was the subject that roused the keenest interest, and held the absorbed attention, of the young and the old; they were occasions when the listeners were perfectly *en rapport* with the speaker, not just in a lecture and in the listening to it, but in an experience of thinking-together, of thinging-together with a purpose, which has vital bearing on the spiritual redemption of man in modern civilization.

The subject was discussed in its two aspects, namely,

*individuality* versus *personality,* the problems arising from freedom at the level of *individuality* and the possibility of its solution by spiritual growth to the higher level of *personality,* and the associated problem of *the current view of work as drudgery* and *joy to be sought entirely outside the world of work.*

The problem posed by the word *here* in the question: Where do we go from here? has a general reference as well as a special one.

In the general sense, it means all that constitutes the state of human welfare which a modern welfare state has achieved or is well on the way of achieving: education, economic opportunities and resources, suitable employment, and the delights of social existence. These have been attained, and more than attained, by modern man in countries like the U.S.A., Australia, and Holland; and this very attainment has created newer tensions, fears, and unfulfilment. And modern man finds his erstwhile philosophy of materialism failing him in his efforts to tackle these problems; he finds that light rather pale, making only darker the darkness within him; and he is in search of a deeper and more satisfying philosophy which will help him to enlighten his mind and heart and steady his feet in the welter of the modern technological civilization. *It is this search that is landing him today, in waves and waves of exploratory voyages, on the shores of the vast continent of Indian philosophical and spiritual thought, especially of Vedānta.* This yearning for, and exploration of, that strange yet fascinating continent of thought is the most creative adventure of the restless human spirit today, as it was of the physical continents of the earth four centuries ago, and of the physical universe as a whole during these four centuries.

## *Western Culture: An Achievement of High Spiritual Value*

But the word *here* carries a special sense, one that lies at the cross-roads of human destiny today. The one priceless and abiding fruit of modern Western science and modern Western culture is to be sought, not in the bumper products of its industries and technology but, as a fruit of them, in the change within the spirit of man himself: *in the sense of individual freedom and individual worth and dignity it has roused and fostered in him.* Through its blessings, human beings and groups in the mass have become transformed into human individuals with identity and destiny. This is specially true with respect to women and the working classes, who constitute about 90 per cent of humanity. Their liberation from long submergence in the amorphous and faceless social mass, and enthronement on the high pedestal of human individuality, is the one unique and great achievement of the modern age. No ancient culture or society — Greek or Roman, Chinese or Hindu — had attempted or achieved this in the same sweeping way as the modern Western culture has done. And the rest of the submerged humanity today everywhere are eager to share in this great fruit of modern Western culture. And that constitutes its universal human relevance.

Vedānta recognizes in this fruit of modern Western culture an achievement of high spiritual value. The philosophic and spiritual aim of Vedānta is the restoration of man to his true status of freedom and dignity, irrespective of sex, race, caste, or creed. It discovered and proclaimed, in its Upaniṣads over four thousand years ago, the glory of the human spirit in language which has few equals in world literature. In the luminous words of Swami Vivekananda

(*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. II, ninth edition, p. 250):

'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist.'

And Vivekananda says about these Upaniṣads, the philosophy of which recognizes, in *the freedom of the individual* attained and fostered by modern Western culture, an achievement of high spiritual value (*ibid.,* Vol. III, eighth edition, p. 238):

'And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom — physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom — are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.'

### *The Individual to Grow into the Person*

Modern man has achieved *individuality;* it is a great value; but it is not enough, says Vedānta. It is only a step, a necessary step, on the long road of human spiritual growth, says Vedānta. It is only the preliminary step for man's *psycho-social* evolution, which is the nature of evolution at the human stage, says twentieth-century biology; strengthening the ego centred in his organic individuality is only 'a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value', as expressed luminously by the authors of the bulky book on modern biology: *The Science of Life,* page 878.

How is it *a convenient provisional delusion,* how is it only a *strategic value?* What is provisional about it? Why is it not an end value? And what is that end value? Vedānta deals with these important philosophical questions, an

understanding of which will bring great reward to modern man and his great culture.

Before its birth, a baby is part of its mother's body; but as soon as it is born, it becomes an individual. And *the first education of a new born human child is its education in individuality,* the strengthening of the ego centred in its organic system; it is encouraged to assert its individuality, to stand on its own feet, to discover its own identity. *The counter-part of this education of the new-born child is the education of the socially submerged mass man to discover his or her own individuality and identity.* Both thereby experience an awakening to the world of individual freedom and individual worth and dignity.

This is the first education of the child. But is it also the last and final education of man? Yes, says the current Western philosophy of man. No, says Vedānta. No, says also twentieth-century biological *wisdom.* That individuality is only a 'provisional delusion of considerable strategic value'. Man must grow beyond it. And that is the most fascinating and rewarding field of human growth, continuing his growth physical, before and after birth, and growth intellectual, after birth. *The child must also grow spiritually,* whispers Vedānta. It is not as palpable a growth as physical growth is; it is also less palpable than intellectual growth. *But it is more significant than either for a being so high in the scale of evolution as man.* For, it is that spiritual growth alone that helps man to *communicate* with other beings, to love and to be loved, to dig affections in each other, to establish enduring human relationships, disclosing through all these a dimension to himself higher than the organic, higher than even the intellectual. *The capacity to love is not an intellectual one.* Intellect can write a learned thesis on love without experiencing what love is. Great intellectuality and much

rascality can co-exist and does co-exist. Intellectual development of man, while still tethered to his ego presiding over his organic individuality, is what makes man a problem to himself and a problem to others. *Modern man is caught up in this tragic situation.* Vedānta whispers to him today *to enlarge the bounds of his freedom* by continuing his spiritual growth from *individuality* to *personality*. Man at the level of his individuality and individual freedom is compared by the late Bertrand Russell to a billiard ball; and the only relationship between one billiard ball and another billiard ball, he says, is collision. Man at the raw ego level knows how to collide, and the more the intellectual growth, the more violent the collision. *It is by growing from individuality to personality that we eliminate collision and substitute communication in its place.* And that signifies *the spiritual growth* of man.

We strengthen the ego and, through it, the sense of individuality, of the new-born child. But that is to be treated only *as its first* but *not its final* education. We do not desire to leave him as a billiard ball; we do not desire him to collide with the next child that comes into the home, the next child that he comes across in the streets. We desire that he does develop the capacity *to enter into them* and *to be entered into by them,* to love them and to be loved by them. But this *entering into* and *being entered into* by other human beings is not a physical or intellectual capacity or value but a spiritual capacity or value. It is a by-product of his spiritual growth, the spontaneous manifestation of his spiritual nature, *to the awareness of which he has risen by that second education from individuality to personality.* 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man', says Swami Vivekananda. It is *continued* education; it is *deeper education.* Through this rising from individuality

to personality, man learns to forge a new integration with other human beings, *a free person* establishing free and enduring relationships with *other free persons* in diverse social forms, after liberating himself or herself, through the attainment of individual liberty, from that older thraldom to, and submergence in, the mass.

The capacity for this second integration comes, and comes only, by the *individual* evolving into the *person*, the 'raw' or 'unripe' ego of individuality growing spiritually, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, into the 'ripe' ego of personality. The ego or self remains, but, in its 'raw' state, it was tied to the organic system, and, in its 'ripe' state, it expands beyond the organic system, using the organic system only as a base and a venue for its spiritual evolution, like the house in which one lives. Man is socially free when he is not tied down to his house, but remains free to go out and communicate with people in other houses or come back freely into his own; otherwise, it becomes a prison and he, the prisoner within it. *Similarly, man is spiritually free when he is not tied down to his own organic system, but is free to expand beyond it, to embrace other beings in a unifying spirit of love and concern and service.* Otherwise, the organic system becomes not a venue of his evolution but his tomb!

Biologist Julian Huxley defines 'person' and 'personality' as the first step in man's psycho-social evolution beyond the individuality centred in his organic system (Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 20):

'Persons are individuals who transcend their merely organic individuality in conscious participation,'

Modern man has gained the freedom of individuality; but by not realizing that that freedom is only 'a provisional delusion', he is jealously hugging that delusion and becoming a victim to that very freedom itself. *For, that freedom has only submerged him or her in the blindness of spiritual ignorance and its offshoot of organic cravings and organic satisfactions, enormously helped by a super-efficient technology.* It has also withered his or her capacity to love or to be loved. And *yet the human heart in the modern age craves for this very value, for this very experience*. The various human relationships such as between wife and husband, parents and children, students and teachers, and between neighbours, are getting denuded of this most precious value in human life. We can see it in the unresponsiveness of young adults and boys and girls to parents, and often *vice versa*. The famine of it makes for an intense craving for it; and the experience of love is difficult to come by, modern man being largely not trained for it; and, therefore, he *talks about it* all the more.

### *Escape from the 'Escape from Freedom'*

The word and value talked about most in modern soceiety is love. And such talk is in *inverse ratio* to experience. Whatever finds expression in experience is largely lust — temporary, wayward, and fitful — utterly incapable of enduring human relationships and for leading man on the path of his psycho-social evolution. This is the sign of the *spiritual poverty* of contemporary society, in spite of its other solid gains of wealth, knowledge and power. Vedānta attributes this to the damming of life-energy at the organic level. And this is the burden of that criticism of modern education, and the society to which that education seeks to fit man or woman, that was voiced poignantly by the young

girl, Joy, during her talk with me at Princeton on 19 October, and that I have described in my narrative of that date: *It doesn't help me to communicate!*

And so individual freedom today, in the absence of its expansion and enrichment into the higher freedom of personality, has become, in the words of a Hindu porverb, 'too hot to be swallowed, and too sweet to be spat out.' Some aspects of this tragic situation, especially in its political relevance, form the theme, and the very title, of Eric Fromm's book: *Escape from Freedom,* which describes itself in its very Foreword as a diagnosis rather than a prognosis — an analysis rather than a solution:

> "It is the thesis of this book that modern man, freed from the bonds of pre-individualistic society, which simultaneously gave him security and limited him, has not gained freedom in the positive sense of the realization of his individual self. ... Freedom, though it has brought him independence and rationality, has made him isolated and, thereby, anxious and powerless. This isolation is unbearable and the alternatives he is confronted with are either to escape from the burden of this freedom into new dependencies and submission, or to advance to the full realization of positive freedom.'

A by-product of this stagnation at the organic level is the increasingly prevalent attitude that all work is drudgery and that the search for the joy of living has to be sought entirely outside the field of work. Five week-days of drudgery are necessary to earn the means, so that the week-ends may be squeezed for joy and pleasure! This has gone far, not only to denude work of all spiritual value but also to denude man of all spiritual significance. Even the care of one's own children becomes drudgery! It cannot be otherwise for such modern men and women whose achievement of individual freedom has only one objective before it, namely, the squeezing of maximum organic satisfactions for one-

self, but not the forging ahead spiritually towards the greater and vaster freedom of personality, *where work becomes touched and beautified by art, and invested with spiritual significance, and converted into the spiritual experience of spontaneous service.* This is the special message of the *Bhagavad-Gītā, a message which has the utmost relevance for the modern age.*

In the absence of the knowledge of *this science of man's spiritual growth,* and of the spiritually integrating power that it gives to man, modern man is resorting more and more to external props and supports to hold together inter-human relations. It cannot be anything else than spiritual poverty that needs scores of 'thank you's' during a day to keep up the patch-work relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and brothers and sisters! Too much formality militates against the intimacy of such relationships. Too much of such formality is foreign to the most intimate of human relationships, namely, between husband and wife. But one is not unwise in resorting to such external props to win and retain love if one has not learnt to produce that integrating value from within oneself. *But once men and women learn the philosophy and technique of creating the value and energy of love from within themselves, man-woman relationship in marriage will become invested with such an intensity and purity as to convert it into a deep spiritual relationship, the wholesome repercussions of which will be felt in every other human relationship.*

### *A Double Criteria of Human Development*

In this connection, it is relevant to recall what I have written in my book: *The Message of the Upaniṣads,* in its

Introduction: 'The Charm and Power of the Upaniṣads' (pp. 42-43):

'In the modern achievement, the sciences of nature have far out-stripped the sciences of man, leaving man puny and unstable, with his centre of gravity always outside of himself. Moral and spiritual values emerge only from the sciences of man. Referring to this imbalance, *the bitter fruits of which are found in the shallowness and sterility* of much of modern intellectualism and in the wide-spread cynicism among the intellectuals, Bertrand Russell says (*The Scientific Outlook*, pp. 278-79):

"Man has been disciplined hitherto by his subjection to nature. Having emancipated himself from this subjection, he is showing something of the defects of slave-turned-master. A new moral outlook is called for in which submission to the powers of nature is replaced by respect for what is best in man. It is where this respect is lacking that scientific technique is dangerous. So long as it is present, science, having delivered man from bondage to nature, can proceed to deliver him from bondage to the slavish part of himself."

'This "respect for what is best in man," and the science which will "proceed to deliver man from bondage to the slavish part of himself", is what the Upaniṣads developed ages ago in India in her *adhyātma vidyā*, in her science of the inner world of man, in her "science of human possibilities," in the words of Julian Huxley. *The intellect on which the light of the Ātman shines is far different from the intellect which is in thrall to the sense organs.* These two groups of sciences — the sciences of outer nature and the sciences of inner nature — need to pool their resources together to advance man on the evolutionary path of total fulfilment. "Take religion away from human society and what remains is a forest of brutes" says Swami Vivekananda. ... Without the spiritual nourishment coming from religion, the phenomenal progress of the modern age has become wobbly in its movement and blind in its course.'

Spirituality is an energy resource. It is also a *palpable* energy resource. But its venue is the human personality, unlike the venue of the other energy resources which is in physical nature. In several discussions, the subject of the

nature and inter-relationships of these two energy resources available to man used to come up. For over a hundred years now, the single criterion of development of a society used to be the per capita production and consumption of electric energy, and now nuclear energy also. This criterion is now found to be, though a *necessary* one, not a *sufficient* one, because we find man unfulfilled in societies where this criterion has been more than fulfilled. U.S.A. is a striking example in this connection. In the modern context, the sciences of nature, physical, has far outstripped the sciences of nature, human. The various crime, sex, drug, and other explosions that are rocking highly developed societies today, and that are beginning to affect the developing societies as well, cannot be tackled by the energies extracted from physical nature, or by the energy of money. They can be tackled only by the extraction and use of the other energy resource which is found in man himself, and only in man, namely, the energy resource of *spirituality*.

Hence, a second and complementary criterion of human development is necessary today, namely, the per capita production and consumption of spiritual energy resources. This is achieved, as we have seen earlier, by man achieving the early stages of his psycho-social evolution, man forging ahead on the first steps of his spiritual growth, man rising from individuality to personality. This is an *educational* process, with its double efficiency yielding the fruit of a two-fold wealth, namely, material wealth outside, through scientific and technological efficiency, and spiritual wealth within, through the science and technique of religion: *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* 'yoga is dexterity or efficiency in work', as proclaimed by the *Gītā*.

There are some physical scientists who realize the importance and pre-eminence of religion, understood as the

science and technique of man's spiritual growth, for modern man. The testmament of astrophysicist R.A. Millikan in the concluding portion of his *Autobiography* is particularly significant in this connection:

> 'It seems to me that the two great pillars upon which all human well-being and human progress rest, are, first, the spirit of religion, and, second, the spirit of science — or knowledge. Neither can attain its largest effectiveness without support from the other. To promote the latter, we have universities and research institutions. But the supreme opportunity for everyone with no exception lies in the first.'

### *Conclusion*

These intellectual and spiritual thinking-together sessions, in the most friendly and constructive atmosphere, were stimulating as much to me as to my listeners. And when I leave the shores and airspace of U.S.A. today, I go enriched by these friendly human associations and fortified by the innumerable acts of love and kindness received, and inspired by the touching farewell words, from group after group, which itself is a great single blessing in a man's life: *'You are going, Swami? but please come again. You may forget us; but we shall never forget you!'*

# BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

## CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS

MUMBADEVI SANSKRIT MAHAVIDYALAYA
An Oriental College teaching Sanskrit and Shastras by traditional methods for Shastri and Acharya (recognised as equivalent to B.A. and M.A. respectively) and for Vachaspati (research).

SHASTRIYA SANSKRIT PARIKSHA VIBHAG
Department of Higher Sanskrit Examinations for Praveshika, Purva Madhyama, Uttara Madhyama, Shastri, Acharya and Vachaspati Examinations.

SARAL SANSKRIT PARIKSHA VIBHAG
Department of Easy Sanskrit Examinations for Balbodh, Prarambh, Pravesh, Parichay and Kovid Examinations.

GITA VIDYALAYA
An Academy for the study of Indian Culture with reference to the *Bhagavad Gita.*

MUNGALAL GOENKA INSTITUTE OF POST-GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
A Post-graduate and Research Institute recognised by the University of Bombay for coaching students for the degrees of M.A. and Ph.D.

MUNSHI SARASWATI MANDIR
An Institute of Culture with a Library consisting of over 65,000 volumes incl[illegible] many Indological volumes and a museum consisting of old and valuable pa[illegible] manuscripts, coins, paintings, etc.

VALLABHJI RAMJI BALPUSTAKALAYA
A Library for Children with facilities for indoor games, educational fi[illegible]

BHARATIYA KALA KENDRA
The Kala Kendra is devoted to the development of Drama, Dance [illegible] produces dramas and dance ballets in English as well as in Hindi, G[illegible] encourage amateur talents. The Sugam Sangit Unit of the Kala [illegible] light music and Rabindra Sangeet. The Bhakti Sangit Un[illegible]

BHARATIYA SANGIT SHIKSHAPITH
An Academy of Indian Classical Music, affiliated to the [illegible] pith, Lucknow, which is recognised by the Central Gov[illegible] to the Bachelor of Music Degree.

BHARATIYA NARTAN SHIKSHAPITH
An Academy of Dance for teaching the four syste[illegible] puri, Kathak, Kathakali and Bharata Natyam.

BHARATIYA ITIHASA VIBHAG
Publishes THE HISTORY AND CULTUR[illegible] volumes. So far nine volumes have been [illegible] The Age of Imperial Unity, (3) The Clas[illegible] (5) The Struggle for Empire, (6) The [illegible] Indian Renaissance Part I (8) Part II a[illegible] volumes will follow. This is consi[illegible] scholars at writing a really compr[illegible] through the ages by a team of [illegible] in which he has specialised.

BOOK UNIVERSITY
Publishes books, ancient [illegible] available the best litera[illegible] in an easily understa[illegible] 20,00,000 copies ha[illegible] in Hindi, Marath[illegible]

RUPEE SERIES
A sister seri[illegible] eminent pe[illegible] [illegible] of

CULTURA[illegible]
A new [illegible] cultu[illegible] [illegible] the basic

PR[illegible]
[illegible] department [illegible] various Mandirs [illegible] ude :

**Bharatiya Vidya Series :** Critical editions of texts, translations and original works of research in Indology, in Sanskrit and English. Published volumes 28.
**Singhi Jain Series :** Critical editions of ancient works and manuscripts connected with Jain religion and literature. Published volumes 55.
**The Glory that was Gurjaradesa :** A comprehensive study of Gujarat in 7 volumes. Published volumes 2.
**Munshi Sahitya :** Social novels, historical plays, biographical works of Munshiji and Smt Lilavati Munshi in Gujarati and English, the copyright whereof has been kindly gifted by them to the Bhavan. Published volumes 128.

JOURNALS:
**Bharatiya Vidya :** An Indological research quarterly in English started in 1943.
**Bhavan's Journal :** An English Fortnightly devoted to life, literature and culture started in 1954. Annual Subscription Rs. 12.00.
**Samarpan :** A Gujarati Fortnightly started in 1959. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50
**Samvid :** A Sanskrit Quarterly started in 1964. Annual Subscription Rs. 4.00

DEPARTMENT OF PRINTING
Bhavan's Press where all its publications and periodicals are printed and where practical training in printing is given to the students of the Bhavan's Rajendra Prasad College of Mass Communication and Media.

RAJENDRA PRASAD COLLEGE OF MASS COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA
An Institution for providing systematic instruction in Journalism, Advertising, Marketing, Public Relations and Printing.

M.M.COLLEGE OF ARTS & N. M. INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, ANDHERI, BOMBAY
The College was opened in June 946. It is affiliated to the Bombay University for courses of studies leading to B.A., B. Sc., M.A., M.Sc. and Ph. D. degrees.

BHAVAN'S COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE, DAKOR, GUJARAT
The College was opened in June 1962. It is affiliated to the Gujarat University, for courses of studies leading to B. A., B.Sc. and B. Com. degrees.

SARDAR PATEL COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, ANDHERI, BOMBAY
The College was opened in June 1962 for courses of studies leading to B.E. (Civil, Mechanical and Electrical) degree. It is affiliated to the Bombay University.

HAZARIMAL SOMANI COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE, CHOWPATTY, BOMBAY
The College was opened in June 1965. It is affiliated to the Bombay University for courses of studies leading to B.A. and B.Sc. degrees.

RANCHHODLAL ACHARATLAL COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE, AHMEDABAD
The College was inaugurated in June 1965. It is affiliated to the Gujarat University for courses of studies leading to B.A., B.Sc., and B. Com. degrees.

BHAVAN'S VALLABHRAM MEHTA PUBLIC SCHOOL, NEW DELHI.
The School coaches students for the Cambridge School Leaving Examination, the medium of instruction being English. Music, Indian Dancing and Painting are also taught to the students.

BHAVAN'S MAHILA MANDAL SCHOOL, ANDHERI, BOMBAY
A day school for preparing pupils for the Maharashtra Secondary School Certificate Examination.

BHAVAN'S ACADEMY OF LANGUAGES, BOMBAY, COIMBATORE, MADRAS AND NEW DELHI
The Academy teaches nine foreign languages, viz., German, Russian, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Sinhalese and Nepali.

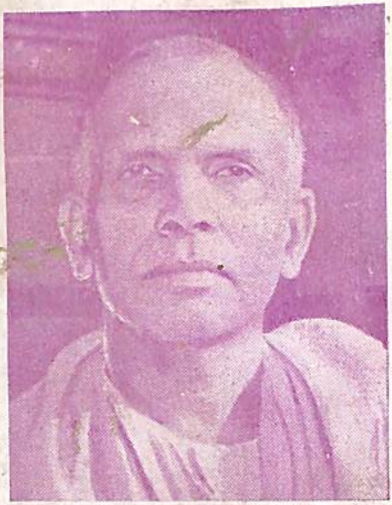
MUNGALAL GOENKA SANSKRIT TRUST
The income from this Trust goes to support the Post-graduate and Research Department of the Bhavan.

BHAVAN'S SAMSKRITIC VIKAS YATRA
This department was constituted in 1963, its chief aim being inculcating culture-consciousness by arranging cultural tours to the various religious, historical, cultural and industrial centres of India.

BHAVAN INTERNATIONAL
This department was constituted in 1964 to maintain and develop Bhavan's contacts in different parts of the world.

BHAVAN'S VALLABHRAM MEHTA PUBLIC SCHOOL, BARODA
The School coaches students for the All-India Higher Secondary Examination, Government of India. Medium of instruction: English. Sanskrit compulsory from Std. VI.

ASSOCIATED BODIES
Sanskrit Vishva Parishad, Bharatiya Stree Seva Sangh, Bombay Astrological Society, Bombay Agri-Horticultural Society and V. S. Mehta College of Science, Bharwari (near Allahabad).



THE AUTHOR

Born at Trikkur, Kerala State, on December 15, 1908, Swami Ranganathananda joined the Ramakrishna Order, the international spiritual and cultural movement founded by Swami Vivekananda, at its branch in Mysore in 1926. He was formally initiated into **Sannyasa** in 1933 by Swami Shivananda, one of the eminent disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and the second President of the Order.

The young monk spent the first nine years of his monastic life in the Mysore branch of the Order. After spending the next three years at the Mission's branch in Bangalore, he worked as Secretary and Librarian at the Mission's branch at Rangoon, Burma, from 1939 to 1942, and thereafter as President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Karachi, now in Pakistan, from August 1942 to August 1948.

From September 1949 to March 1962, he worked as the Secretary of the New Delhi branch of the Mission and from April 1962 to November 1967, he was the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, Director of its School of Humanistic and Cultural Studies, and editor of its monthly journal.

The Swami has travelled extensively abroad, delivering lectures on cultural and spiritual topics. He has been a real messenger of India wherever he has gone.

He has a versatile and facile pen, and has to his credit a number of publications, chief amongst which are **The Christ We Adore, The Essence of Indian Culture, Bhagavan Buddha and our Heritage, Vedanta and Science, India's Educational Vision, Indian Philosophy of Social Work, The Message of the Upanishads, Eternal Values for a Changing Society** and **A Pilgrim Looks at the World** (in two volumes).